F. H. Mullen, M. D.

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
JAN 3 1901
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

BX 9815 .W36 1846 v.3
Ware, Henry, 1794-1843.
The works of Henry Ware, jr

THE

WORKS

OF

HENRY WARE, JR., D. D.

VOL. III.

BOSTON:
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.
LONDON:
JOHN CHAPMAN, 121 NEWGATE STREET.
1847.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1847, by MARY L. WARE, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

STEREOTYPED AT THE
BOSTON TYPE AND STEREOTYPE FOUNDRY.

SERMONS

BY

HENRY WARE, JR., D.D.

VOL. I.

NEW EDITION.

BOSTON:
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.
LONDON:
JOHN CHAPMAN, 121 NEWGATE STREET.
1849.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1847, by Mary L Ware, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

STEREOTYPED AT THE
BOSTON TYPE AND STEREOTYPE FOUNDRY.

ADVERTISEMENT.

This volume of the Works of Henry Ware, Jr., D. D., contains thirty-two sermons, nine of which, namely, Sermons III., VIII., IX., X., XI., XII., XVII., XX., XXI., have been already published. The remainder have been selected from the author's manuscripts.

Concerning the feelings of reverence, and even trembling solicitude, with which the devotional remains of a holy man and eminent divine have been, for more than twelve months, examined and studied, with a view to a selection for this volume, it is unnecessary to speak. Any one can easily imagine how he might be affected, if there were piled upon his table, immediately under his eye, within reach of his hand, and subject to his disposal, the whole of the manuscript sermons of a ministry such as Mr. Ware's, — the collected fruits of so many studious and prayerful hours — the accumulated harvest of so much spiritual wisdom and experience — the instruments of instruction, regeneration, and comfort to thousands of the living and the dead.

The circumstances and principles by which the editor has been guided in making a selection are

such as can hardly fail to justify the choice he has made. It is a great relief to think that no one, after a thorough and careful perusal of the manuscripts, would be likely to decide differently — except, perhaps, in a very few instances — with regard to the sermons to be printed, since they are distinguished by obvious marks of superiority. Some of those not printed — otherwise excellent — are fragmentary; some were *written* without accuracy, because the author trusted to his distinguished powers of extemporaneous speaking, and his great self-possession at the time of delivery; and some, which would be very useful, contain allusions to persons and events that were of much interest at the time and place of their utterance, but which render them unfit for publication. When all such were culled out of the large mass, those which are inserted in this volume were, without controversy, the best that remained.

If, after a perusal of these sermons, any reader should be disappointed, let him think that the same gifted man, who never failed to render his discourses interesting and impressive in the delivery, might have imparted to them, by his own care in the publication, all which they now lack on the printed page: if gratified and benefited, let him be grateful to the sainted instructer, who, being dead, yet speaketh, and to the God who suffers not the influence of his faithful servants to perish.

C. R.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

PAGE.

Existence of the Deity, ... 1

SERMON II.

The Divine Perfections, ... 14

SERMON III.

The Personality of the Deity, ... 26

SERMON IV.

The Divine Government. — Miracles, ... 40

SERMON V.

The Same Subject, continued, ... 54

SERMON VI.

The Divine Government. — Character, Progress, and Consummation of Christianity, ... 67

SERMON VII.

The Divine Government. — Obedience, ... 81

SERMON VIII.

PAGE.

The Duty of Improvement. — A New Year's Sermon,.....94

SERMON IX.

The Moral Principle of the Temperance Movement,.....110

SERMON X.

The Promise of Universal Peace,.....122

SERMON XI.

The Law of Honor,.....141

SERMON XII.

The Duty of Usefulness,.....156

SERMON XIII.

Sources of Moral Weakness and Moral Strength,.....178

SERMON XIV.

The Same Subject, continued,.....187

SERMON XV.

The Christian Conjunction: — Liberty and Authority, Reason and Faith, Liberality and Zeal,.....202

SERMON XVI.

A Parallel between the Jewish and Christian Passovers,.....220

SERMON XVII.

PAGE.
Small Sins,.....231

SERMON XVIII.

Christian Consolations,.....242

SERMON XIX.

The Principles that should govern a Young Man in the Choice of a Profession,.....252

SERMON XX.

Education the Business of Life,.....271

SERMON XXI.

The Same Subject, continued,.....283

SERMON XXII.

The Dangers and Duties of a State of Worldly Prosperity,..297

SERMON XXIII.

The Reason, Uses, and Results of Deferred Retribution,.....310

SERMON XXIV.

The Facilities and the Hinderances to a Religious Life on the Part of the Scholar,.....321

SERMON XXV.

The Same Subject, continued,.....334

SERMON XXVI.

PAGE.
The Difficulties of the Bible,.....350

SERMON XXVII.

Paul and Felix,.....370

SERMON XXVIII.

Harmony between the Doctrines of Justification by Faith and by Works,.....381

SERMON XXIX.

The Same Subject, continued,.....391

SERMON XXX.

The Doctrine of Probation,.....407

SERMON XXXI.

The Doctrine of Probation a Key to the Mysteries and Doctrines of Revelation,.....418

SERMON XXXII.

The Doctrine of Probation a Key to the Mysteries of God's Dealings with Man,.....430

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

EXISTENCE OF THE DEITY.

PSALM XIV. 1.

THE FOOL HATH SAID IN HIS HEART, THERE IS NO GOD.

THE doctrine which stands at the beginning of all revelation and religious teaching is, the doctrine respecting God. Nothing is before it, nothing is beyond it, nothing is important without it, or independent of it. Existence, responsibility, happiness, all rest upon it. That infinite and inscrutable Being, who fills and influences all, and without whom all perishes, — unperceived by human sense, yet every where planting the footsteps of his perfections, — is the first and greatest object of human thought; in the knowledge of whom is the highest wisdom; in the obedience of whom is all virtue; in the love of whom all bliss. Of him Nature speaks aloud in all her works. Him revelation proclaims in a yet fuller and distincter voice. To him the church universal, in its worship and its instruction, perpetually bears witness, seeking to make him known to his children, and to bring his children to him. Nature, and revelation, and the church, testify always with one witness, that he is; that his perfections are infinite; that his government is over all. To this teaching let us listen. Let us seek to bring ourselves nearer to him, and him nearer to us,

by contemplating, deliberately and devoutly, the great doctrine that *he is;* that *he is perfect;* that *he rules all;* — his existence, his perfections, his government.

The first of these topics is sufficient for the present discourse. God is. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. And none but the fool. Whether we understand the Psalmist to mean to speak of folly in the sense of intellectual weakness, or, as is frequent in Scripture, in the sense of *wickedness,* he intimates in either, and in both, the only states of the mind in which the existence of a Deity can be denied — fatuity, or sin. The wicked man, resolved on sin, and instinctively dreading its consequences under a holy government, would fain persuade himself there is no such government; and so whispers to his heart — in his heart; not aloud, lest he should be overwhelmed by the contradictions that would burst upon him from outraged Nature and indignant man. And the man whose power of reasoning has departed, or been perverted, in the madness or the conceit of his philosophy, denies sometimes that sacred existence. The world by wisdom — when left to its wisdom — knew not God; mistook his character, his government, his will. But it is only they who have forsaken the wisdom even of the world, and followed the guidance of their single arrogant or perverted understanding, who have attained the folly of denying him. "*The fool is wiser in his own conceit, than ten men who can render a reason.*"

Indeed, so obvious, so palpable, so incontrovertible, is this principal doctrine, that it has been declared that the anomaly never was found in human form, of an individual absolutely, and without qualification, an atheist. Let us hope that it is so; let us be willing to believe that no child of God has ever wholly cast away its parent, and severed the tie which binds it to the source of being. But, however this may be,

the voice of mankind, in all the ages and nations which have yet spoken, has been unanimous in its recognition of the divine Creator. No people so barbarous, none so degraded, has been discovered, that the idea and worship of a supreme power has not been found with them. The fact stands. It is to be accounted for; and it must be, either on the supposition of a revelation at the beginning by which man was taught from God, and whence the knowledge descended to all subsequent times; or by some intuitive and instinctive sense of human nature, so fashioned that it cannot exist without sympathy with its Former; or by some testimony so strong in the works of creation, that the reason necessarily inferred their Author. In either case, the testimony is not to be resisted. It may not amount to a demonstration, but it is impossible for any one to doubt, that this universal agreement of all minds, under all circumstances, in that which forms the most distinguishing and highest instinct of human nature, must have a solid foundation. To say otherwise, would be to say there is a falsehood branded into the very constitution of the soul; that every man is born with a living voice pleading within his bosom to reverence, fear, sympathize with, and follow some infinite paternity, which does not exist; and that the universe is full of signatures, purporting to be from him, and offering themselves to man's interpretation, which serve only to mislead.

This native propensity of man, therefore, (whether it be properly styled a faculty, capacity, or instinct,) through which the religious sentiment becomes as inseparable from human nature as any human desire, and in conformity with which all nations have their worship, — this, is to be regarded as an irrefragable witness to the divine existence. May we not say, as God's testimony, that he is? For who could have placed it there in the soul but the Creator of the soul?

The human mind is not, when unperverted, capable of entertaining the proposition that God is not. It shrinks from the idea; rejects it spontaneously, as an impossibility; turns from it, as an absurdity; and wonders at the man who asks for proof, as it does at him who asks proof that the sun shines, or that a bad action is not a good one. It may not be, as some would fain persuade themselves, that, in consequence of this, every man is *religious*, spontaneously, unconsciously, and as a matter of course. Capable of being religious, he doubtless is; but to *be religious unconsciously*, is a contradiction of speech, or a false use of language. Religion implies intention and effort; and it is sadly too true, that multitudes acknowledge the being of God, and speak fine phrases of his perfections, and yet in their works deny him; have no intention to serve him, make no effort to honor him. Their testimony, however, to his existence, is all the more strong; because, without any allegiance of life, or love of heart, they yet find it impossible to evade the knowledge of Him to whom all allegiance and love are due.

Thus, therefore, when we look within us, we find amplest proof that God is. Equally so, when we look around us. He hath not left himself without witnesses. It is impossible for a sound man to cast around him an observant eye, and not see the marks of Deity. The conviction is instantaneous, so long as the mind is constituted as it is, that this wonderful frame of things — this curious complication of unconscious matter, appointed and operating for so wise and beautiful ends; and, in connection with it, this higher creation of intelligent and moral beings — must have had an author; could not have come from chance; could not have been undesigned and uncreated. Chance! it is enough to pronounce the word to cause the idea to be

rejected. It was long ago seen that chance, which cannot make a poem, cannot make a world. And as to an uncreated and eternal universe, it is soon seen that, of the only two suppositions which the mind can make, this is infinitely the least tenable. Something must have existed from eternity, else nothing could ever have come into existence. This is at once assumed as unquestionable. The only two suppositions, then, possible to be made, are these: (1) the universe, with its structures, laws, and operations, such as it is, has always existed, — the material and intellectual; or, (2) a Being of infinite intelligence has existed from eternity, who gave being to this universe. But the mind at once perceives that this second supposition more easily accounts for all things than the first, and therefore is more tenable. If there existed originally this infinite intelligence, all else is explained; for, there being an infinite Creator, nothing is left to be asked. It is one simple, uncompounded, independent, all-originating cause. But the supposition of the eternity of the uncreated universe implies the coëxistence from eternity of a variety of causes, mutually dependent, — the material and intellectual systems being implicated with each other, — and thus nothing being self-existent or independent, this is infinitely a more complicated or incredible supposition than the other; and therefore the mind rejects it. The mind is better satisfied to rest on the idea of an infinite, intelligent Author, who devised and gave being to all else, than on the idea of a system without an author, self-existent and independent. Something must have been eternal; — and if we may speak of any thing, on such a subject, as within human conception, we must say, it is more easy to conceive of intelligence alone eternal, than of intelligent and material systems, and the infinite and complicated arrangements of the universe. And besides, what could be gained by adopt-

ing the more difficult supposition? It gives up the universe to an eternal Fate, — as little reasonable or comfortable as a perpetual chance. It is not in the nature of the mind to assent to the stern and unsympathizing creed. It cannot be satisfied till it finds a Father.

And not only so, but it finds it impossible to resist the marks of design and adaptation every where visible, the tokens which all existences display,— from the constellations above us, in all their greatness, to the minutest arrangement which has yet been detected among the little animals of earth; the tokens which all alike set forth, of a provident care and wise thoughtfulness. The mind cannot reflect upon them, and then deny that they originated in the beneficent forethought of a wise Creator, without abandoning the fundamental principles of reasoning and faith on which it guides itself in all other affairs, without violating the law which determines that every effect must have its cause. When we discover the ancient mounds in our western regions, or come upon the deserted temples of Pæstum, we reason that man has been there, and no one would dare to deny it. But Pæstum, and the western mounds, so far as the human understanding can discover, might just as easily have been built without man, as the earth and the stars without a God. The absurdity is one and the same, to believe that these mysterious systems were turned into space, and guided there, without a divine wisdom and power, and to declare that the steam-ship on mid-ocean affords no presumption that human wisdom and power are concerned in it.

Accordingly, this simple and natural argument has always been held conclusive. It appeals to the common sense of every man, and admits of no reply. Job used it, when he said, "Ask now the beasts, and they shall tell thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to

the earth, and it shall tell thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare it unto thee." Our Savior, Christ, used it, when he appealed to the lilies of the field, and the fowls of the air. The apostle used it, when he said, in that noble chapter to the Romans, "The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." And in later days, the sagacious companion of Dr. Clarke used it, when, after listening to the abstract ratiocination of that acute divine, he plucked a little flower from the garden-bed, and remarked, that it contained a more convincing argument than all his metaphysics. And so, at the present day, science is bringing its contributions from all regions; — from the height of the heavens; from the depths of the earth; from the economy of all animals; from the habits of all plants; from the history of all revolutions; — and, having arranged them in method, publishes them in volumes adapted to every capacity, with the express design of confirming the faith that God is, and exciting a more perpetual persuasion of his presence and agency. Happy they, whose eyes are always open to this ever-present argument! Happy they, who walk so thoughtfully through the earth, that every thing they meet reminds them of their Father! Happy they, who thus find themselves as unable to forget, as it is impossible to disbelieve!

It must not be overlooked, however, that the validity of this argument for the divine existence has been denied. It has even been lamented, as a misfortune, that any stress should have been laid upon it. An attempt has consequently been made to discredit it, as incomplete and unsatisfactory; as going no farther than to prove a cause, without showing that that cause is intelligent or personal; and it is declared that no argument is to be depended on but that which is

drawn from the nature and endowments of the human mind; since, without the acquaintance with mind, thence derived, no conception could be had of an *infinite* mind — of any thing more than a necessary cause.

But it is not easy to see why, for this reason, any distrust should be excited toward this argument from design. For no argument is used, except necessarily, in connection with the attributes of the mind itself — and of course attributing to the great, infinite, originating Cause, that intelligence and personality without which there can be no design. Design, in its very idea, implies a person who designs, and intelligence capable of designing. To use the word otherwise, is to use it without a meaning. To show, therefore, that it exists in the universe, is to show that there is an intelligent being at its head; not a mere cause, but a personal cause.

The objection seems to be unfounded, therefore. It assumes that the argument from design is pursued without reference to the nature and powers of the human mind, — which never has been done, and, in the nature of things, is impossible to be done. I cannot, in imagination even, separate design from mind; and when the contrivances of the universe show me a designing mind, I learn, in that very fact, that there exists a Being having thought, will, free agency, and all the attributes of mind, in an unlimited measure. The inference, unavoidably, goes to this entire extent. I cannot, therefore, give up the argument. I find it in the Old Testament and in the New — in the Gospels, and in the Epistles — in the forms of the ancient and the modern church, and in the works of science and philosophy. It has satisfied the wise and the devout, the learned and the humble; — and, as long as man is appointed to a pilgrimage among the works of God, it will meet him at every turn, — from the

firmament, from the waters, from the insect, from the dew-drop, — corroborating the devout tendency of his soul, and cheering the dark passages of his journey. And when his spirit sinks, and his powers of reasoning are bewildered, and his faith flutters because his intelligent apprehension is clouded, then, blessed be God! the small flower from the garden-bed shall recall conviction to his mind, and restore the tranquillity of a filial faith.

Undoubtedly, the argument from the nature, and attributes, and instincts of the human soul is of essential value, never to be overlooked; and therefore I began with it — as we must always begin with it — in the outset of my remarks. But let it not be esteemed as alone valid, and be made to cast discredit on all others. Undoubtedly, without the aid of the mind, and a knowledge of its attributes, the reasoning from the marks of design in the universe, to the existence and character of its Author, would be inadequate. But this circumstance does not *invalidate* the argument; it only goes to *explain it;* i. e. it is simply announcing in form, what always before was taken for granted, that man could not reason conclusively on this subject, if he were not possessed of reasoning faculties.

The sum, therefore, of the whole obviously is, such are the endowments of man's nature that he finds it impossible not to acknowledge the existence of a God; — there is a witness within himself, and there is a witness without, in the works of the universe, which, rightly interpreted, compel him to recognize a Being of supreme wisdom and power; in conformity with which, this faith has always existed among all ages and nations.

But there is other testimony still. All this, by the careless rover through life, by the busy or indifferent, such as most men are, may be overlooked; and the less gifted and

less favored may stupidly plod on, never interpreting the sentiment within them, or the glory around them. And therefore it has pleased this mysterious Being to come out from his hiding-place, as it were, and break the silence of Nature, and declare, with his own voice, that HE IS. He has not left it to the wise, who by wisdom know not God, and who darken counsel by words without knowledge. He has sent his messages, and published to mankind his being and his will. The existence of the Jewish Scriptures is a proof that he is; the doctrine of Christ, and the power of Christianity, is a proof that he is. For whence could they be, if not from that infinite source? Men holy, pure, true, — to whom falsehood and fraud were sorer than death, — have come forward to promulgate virtue and serve mankind. If they did not do that sacred work with a lie in the right hand, they came from God, and spoke by his consent. We, therefore, know that he is; — and in all the signatures of grace and truth which, through their labors, have been stamped upon the world, we see the immortal witness to the being of God. If we could account for the sun in the heavens, and the ordinances of the seasons, without his agency, still, when we looked on what those holy men had done, and the blessedness they had brought to the earth, we should be compelled to acknowledge him; we should be driven to say, with Job, "*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee.*"

Indeed, it is wonderful how almost entirely we are indebted to revelation for the decided and elevated doctrine of God, which now prevails in the world. We are accustomed to speak of the teachings of Nature as if they were not only real, but distinct and certain to the human mind. But how is it, in point of fact? What has the human mind learned from them respecting God, when unaided by reve-

lation? During the ages before Christ came, and in the lands where Christ is unknown, the same heavens have forever declared the glory of God, and the whole testimony of external providence and the intelligent soul has been uttered to our race. But who believed the report? How many were found to interpret the witness aright? Who mastered the sublime doctrine? Alas! here and there one among the wisest; who therefore is famous forever, as a mighty philosopher. The truth which children in Christian lands are familiar with, and taught to discover in every rising sun, and every turning leaf, it was then an immortality of fame to dimly discover; — while the mass of men, with the bright volume of Nature open before them, were unable to construe a sentence aright, and lived in a base and hopeless idolatry. We often speak of the lessons of natural religion, as if they led the way and introduced us to revealed religion. In order of logical sequence they may be first, but, in point of fact and experience, we learn what we know of God and his perfections from the messages of revelation; and then, thus informed, we inquire of Nature, and gain its corroboration of the doctrine. We use the Bible as a key, wherewith to unlock the volume of the universe; — we take it as a lamp in our hands, and, throwing its light on the character which God has stamped on his works, we are then able to interpret them; while, by other men, they have been dimly read, or even to many remain undeciphered hieroglyphics. And thus the Bible, in fact, is no less the great teacher of natural religion, than of revealed. In the whole compass of heathen letters, we in vain search for as much insight into the religious economy of the world, and as true instruction of its Author and his ways, drawn from a survey of Nature and the constitution of things, as we find in the Psalmist, the Prophets,

and the Apostles. Being brought nearer to him in his Word, they more clearly saw him, and more justly appreciated him in his works. They spake of him accordingly. And we, too, because the eyes of our understandings are first opened by his Word, are able to receive with fulness and satisfaction the testimony of his works.

Thus therefore it is, that this chief doctrine is confirmed to us by these various and corroborative testimonies; most distinctly by the divine Word, and distinctly too, to the prepared and attentive mind, by indications of nature from within, and by all the works of God from without.

And so in him we live, and move, and have our being. Because he is, we are. Without him we are nothing. To him, therefore, are due our utmost reverence, gratitude, and trust. We do not presume to attain to the full comprehension of him. That knowledge is high as heaven — what can we do? deeper than hell — what can we know? But we know that he is, and that he is the Creator and Father of the universe. We know that all things are upheld by him, and in him are blessed. We know that what is accordant with his will is best, and will be prospered, and that whatever contradicts it is evil, and will be frustrated. It is the first duty, therefore, to be wholly surrendered to his will; to abandon ourselves, unreservedly, to an absolute acquiescence and submission; to be nothing, and desire nothing, except that his will be done. This is the secret, too, of human happiness. The heart that knows no desire but what conforms to the pleasure of the Father, never can be disappointed; it will always have its desire gratified; it will experience no interruption to its peace; for the pleasure of the Father is always accomplished. Brethren, let us understand this; if we sin, it is because we are not thus self-abandoned to the divine authority. Little as we are,

and insignificant, in the presence of this infinite One, who fills and sways all, we yet insist on having our own will; and therefore, also, we are so restless, so dissatisfied, so annoyed by the trials of life, so overcome by disappointment, and vexation, and wretchedness. We oppose our little selfishness to the infinite will of the beneficent Father. No wonder that in such opposition we find no peace. Let us be more wise. It is not enough to be satisfied barely that God is; we must live agreeably to that great doctrine. It is only the consummation of folly to rejoice in his existence, and then to contradict it in our lives. Every measure of contradiction, however small, is folly. Atheism, as a doctrine, as an article of deliberate faith, scarcely exists, and is hardly to be guarded against in any open form. The fools who say in their heart, "There is no God," are too few to be much regarded. But practical atheism — the atheism of an existence which disregards him, and plods on through life as if he were not — this is not uncommon, this is to be feared. It may be amongst us, poisoning the fountains of social virtue and prosperity, and not be perceived by us. It may be within us, eating out our soul's life, without our being aware of it. Here, then, let us place our guard. Let us not be of those, condemned by the apostle, who did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and whom he therefore left to their own folly; but let us rather, in the spirit of the Psalmist, say continually, "Whom have we in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth whom we desire beside thee. Our flesh and our heart fail, but thou art the strength of our heart, and our portion forever."

SERMON II.

THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

PSALM LXII. 11.

GOD HATH SPOKEN ONCE; TWICE HAVE I HEARD THIS; THAT POWER BELONGETH UNTO GOD.

In my last discourse, I proposed to treat the doctrine concerning God; which I accordingly distributed into three parts — *his existence* — *perfections* — *government.* The first of these I then discussed. I proceed now to the second. God is a *perfect being.*

To a subject of such variety and extent, it is not easy, within any brief limit, to assign the consideration which it demands. It embraces the whole circle of what are commonly called the *natural* and the *moral attributes;* each, of itself, requiring much thought and large remark, in order to any thing like an adequate illustration. The natural attributes are self-existence, infinite power, universal presence, universal knowledge, spirituality, eternity. The moral attributes are infinite wisdom, holiness, goodness, mercy, rectitude, justice, truth. These, combined, make up the definition of God; and it is obvious how inexhaustible a field of speculation and inference is entered on when any one of these is considered, much more when all of them

solicit our regard. But no such large survey do I propose to myself. It is enough for the purpose I have in view, to attempt a concise representation of the most prominent of these various attributes, as they stand connected with each other in the necessity of the divine nature, and the action of the divine administration.

In speaking of these perfections, we recur, first of all, to the language of revelation. From this, more than from any other source, we gather the definite notion of those attributes which constitute the divine perfection. It is the exalted description of the sacred writers, which brings most distinctly before the mind the images of infinite power and love; of spirituality, omniscience, and truth; of inviolable rectitude and inexhaustible mercy, — all harmoniously and sublimely blended in him who is at once Governor and Father of the universe. No writers have spoken so loftily or so worthily on this dread theme; sometimes in bold figures of material greatness, in images drawn from the analogy of human dominion; but when the figurative veil is removed, the lineaments of the Deity, all spiritual and all paternal, beam forth in a clear lustre, as no merely human pen has been able to draw them. And hence it is, that, with the extension of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures throughout the world, the prevalent ideas of divinity have been elevated and purified. The representations of that holy book have taken the place of all others; and the civilized world possesses a universal acquaintance with God in some measure worthy of the conceptions that rational creatures ought to have of that awful Being, and which would never otherwise have prevailed. Thus we have been taught of God. No man had seen God at any time; but that beloved Son who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him.

In the next place, nature and providence, and the constitution of things, bear witness to these perfections, thus united in the divine Being. To him who, with thoughtful eye, surveys the heavens and the earth, ponders the laws of the seasons and the revolutions of time, weighs the history of mankind, the fortunes of society, the vicissitudes, the inequalities, the compensations, the mystery, and the end of the human condition, — to him, there is ample evidence that infinite power formed, that infinite wisdom directs, that perfect love rules, that omniscient rectitude pervades; — and though clouds and darkness may be round about him, yet that justice and truth are the foundation of his throne. To such conceptions of God the right study of nature conducts; and, aided by the light of the divine Word, we read its testimony all clearly and without a hesitating accent; and some among the wise men who knew not that light, yet saw enough to warrant them in a similar thought, and were able to assert, from their own observation, the infinite perfection of God.

In coming to this result, they were doubtless aided by the study of their own minds, and reasoning on the nature with which themselves were endowed. This is another source of testimony to the divine perfections. We cannot reflect on the character of the first and universal cause, without being compelled, by the necessity of our nature, to ascribe to that cause an unlimited measure of all the intellectual and moral faculties which belong to ourselves. Whence have we strength, wisdom, intellect, but from him? And if he bestowed he must possess. Whence man's capacity for spiritual conceptions, for moral attainment; for the love, the pursuit, the desire of moral perfection, except from the Author of his being? He, then, must possess the same; and as the Psalmist reasons, "*He that formed the eye, shall*

not he see? He that gave man knowledge, shall not he know?" If we inquire in what measure he possesses them, and apply ourselves to contemplation with a view to determine their limit in his nature, we soon find ourselves compelled to say, There is no measure, there is no limit. Nothing less than infinity answers the idea of the mind. Feeling itself to be what it is, it stretches out to the conception of the infinite, and cannot rest short of a God of infinite perfections. It cannot imagine the beginning or the end of time; the beginning or end of space. No more can it imagine the boundaries of the creating and intelligent power that acts through all time and peoples space with worlds. It consents, of necessity, to the sublime expression, — He inhabiteth eternity, he filleth immensity. Then, fixing the thought yet more intently, it perceives that all this cannot be, without involving the necessity of ascribing to that infinite Being *all intellectual and moral perfections.* They follow by inevitable consequence; spirituality, because a *material* being, infinitely extended, would exclude all other existence; omniscience, implied in universal presence; wisdom, because the junction of folly with an omnipresent and all-powerful mind involves an absurdity; rectitude, goodness, and truth, because, in the nature of things, they approve themselves to the mind; to an infinite mind, infinitely. They never are violated, except for the sake of some good to be gained by their violation. A Being of infinite power has all possessions within his reach; he has nothing to gain by the violation of these great principles; and therefore is consistent with them to the whole extent of his infinite capacity.

The proper development of the train of thought hinted at in these remarks is beyond the limits of a discourse like this. I propose, therefore, nothing further, than to select

from the whole field of argument and illustration a single point, the exposition of which may be sufficient to show the manner of applying the mind to the whole subject.

To this end, I take for a starting-point the emphatic declaration of the Psalmist, in the text: "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." Power is that attribute of Divinity which first and prominently attracts attention. It is that in which all the others appear to reside. The first inference, in looking upon the universe, is, that there is a power behind all. The mind is struck at once, and irresistibly, with the manifest marks of power. Accordingly, in all languages, the usual term which describes the Divinity, expresses or implies this idea of power. We speak of the power above us; the supreme power; the Almighty; the Lord God omnipotent: and multitudes of men never use the name of God without prefixing to it an epithet conveying this idea. *Almighty God* is the most frequent of all designations of the Deity.

Power, then, is the first and leading character of the Divinity. This being perceived, it is easy to see that its uniform possession carries with it the possession of the other perfections, natural and moral, which pertain to God; so that it is impossible to conceive of the existence of omnipotence in any being in whom shall not also reside omniscience, spirituality, justice, truth, and goodness. Therefore, if the works of the universe testify to a being of almighty power, the inference is direct to a being of infinite perfections.

1. The first inference is to the *spirituality of the divine nature.* If *almighty*, God must be a spirit. Without pretending to decide the philosophy of matter and mind, it is enough for all practical purposes, that there exist certain indisputable differences between the phenomena assigned to

each. Spirit thinks, and is self-active; matter moves not, except moved by some foreign power. Matter is destitute of power, excepting so far as inaction is power. It is in itself immovable; requiring to be acted upon; never originating action. To state this, is but to state a simple and unquestioned principle. So far as human knowledge goes, so far as human observation extends, wherever we are able to trace and find the beginning of action, the origin of power, it springs, not from matter, but from that thought and will which we call *spirit*. In man and other animals, in which we have the most familiar examples of the beginning of action, it is the will, the thought, conscious effort, which lies at the beginning. In no other actions are we able to trace the motive to its source. In the case of electricity, gravitation, and other natural powers connected with motion, — in the winds, volcanoes, sap of trees, — it is to be observed, that we do not, and cannot, trace the movement to its source. We can only say, that in all instances in which we *can trace it*, it leads to mind or spirit, as the originator. We are bound to believe, then, that where we cannot trace it, the original is the same, — the beginning is mind — the great power of the universe is a spirit.

Matter is essentially powerless. There is not the slightest evidence to lead to the belief that motion, of any kind, could result from any combination of mere material substances. Either directly or mediately, it must spring from spirit. Even in those cases which may at first appear to contradict this remark, a little attention will show the contrary. Various substances are endowed with qualities which, when placed in certain relations with other substances, give occasion to active changes. The laws of gravitation, and magnetism, and electricity, and the chemical attractions, are familiar instances of this; giving rise to

the most remarkable activity in the universe. But, as far as we know, these substances are wholly unequal to beginning that motion which shall bring them into the necessary relations. Whenever we *know* how it takes place, it begins in some intelligent agency. Thus the powerful agents in the laboratory of the chemist stand there forever ineffectual and harmless, until the will of the mover puts them into such relations of juxtaposition, &c., that their innate laws are called into operation. And so we rightfully infer that it must be in the great laboratory of the universe; they lie there inert in their magazines. And when we see them brought to act on each other, what is the legitimate inference? Is it not that *there* also is the will of some mover to bring them together, and place them within reach of each other? We can only reason from what we know; and to allow any other inference would be to draw conclusions from our ignorance, not from our knowledge. We do not see the beginning of their activity; we do not discern how far back it was, nor where; but we never know action to *begin*, excepting in the spirit.

And thus the display of infinite power implies the spirituality of Him who exerts it; as in the world of human affairs, when we discern the putting forth of great power for good or for evil, in the promotion or the hinderance of social well-being and the civilization of the race, we always attribute it to the action of mind. And the greater the work, and the more vigorous the activity, the more certainly we determine that there is a high action of mind; — so the more we study the wonders of the universe, we perceive that only mind can be their origin, and that the God of all is a spirit.

2. Another inference from the possession of almighty power concerns the *rectitude of the divine character.*

We judge that a Being of infinite power cannot be other than regardful of right, and incapable of injustice; that equity in him must be perfect as his power is extensive, and wrong as impossible as weakness. We cannot conceive that infinite power should be coupled with injustice and oppression, except on the impossible supposition of a being infinitely malignant. Of that impossibility there is evidence enough. Malevolence, the love of injury, the delight in inflicting misery, cannot belong to Him who created a world so full of enjoyment. We are witnesses, every hour, to the absurdity of such a supposition; and if there be no proof of unmixed malignity, then, I say, that the possession of infinite power proves the divine equity. For what is it that leads any being to injustice or oppression, who does not essentially delight in it? It is that he thinks another stands in the way of his interest or rights; and, to secure himself, he wrongs him. It is through the desire to make certain his own happiness, which he thinks jeoparded by others, or to gain something claimed by others. But where there is infinite power nothing is in jeopardy, nothing can be taken away.

In human affairs, we are accustomed to speak of the danger of intrusting power to individuals. "No one can be trusted with it; it is sure to be abused." The history of the world is appealed to in confirmation of the caution. And why is not the difficulty infinitely increased, where the possessor of power becomes infinite? For several reasons: 1st. Because in a limited being, the appetite increases with the possession; the desire grows; and there is always more to be gained, in order to satisfy it. It is in the pursuit of *more*, that the most powerful loses sight of justice in his selfishness, and oppresses that he may enlarge his dominion. But no such temptation can reach Him who already possesses all

power. Every thing being his, his happiness necessarily consists in giving rather than taking from others; his glory, in the beneficent use of what cannot be augmented.

2. The possessor of finite power may lose what he has; and thus he becomes suspicious, jealous; guards himself; is armed against enemies, and always ready to try his strength in warfare. Not so with the Possessor of infinite power; he cannot lose, and cannot therefore be jealous, suspicious. Secure in his own unassailable might, he cannot anticipate by wrong the suspected wrong of another.

3. The finite being has his pleasure to seek; passions to indulge; tastes to gratify; plans of aggrandizement and enjoyment to prosecute. With these, the ease, comfort, success, possessions, of other men may interfere; and therefore he is induced to trample on them. This is the history of a large part of human injustice. But not so with the Almighty. Passion is not his; self-gratification he is above; and the plans which he pursues are such as shall promote, not abridge, the well-being of his creatures.

4. With man, the question of power becomes the great and all-absorbing consideration, to which every thing else does, and must, give way, at whatever cost to others. But not so with God. Being infinite and impregnable, his care never can be to sustain his power, but only to use it. Never tempted, therefore, by a sense of weakness to do wrong, he can seek only to do right; and his rectitude will be as complete as his dominion is immovable.

A similar course of remark satisfies us that the possession of infinite power must be accompanied by *perfect goodness*. The infirmities and temptations which lead man to sin, cannot reach the throne of Heaven. They overthrow the tendencies to kindness and truth in frail man; but they cannot touch the mind which has no frailty and knows no fear.

In goodness, we comprehend benevolence and mercy. Benevolence, even in man, has often been seen carried to that extent that only failure in power limited it; and we cannot imagine that in the Deity it should stop short of the power. If we can conceive that even man, embarrassed as he is by various hinderances and imperfections, yet shall exercise benevolence up to the measure of his ability, then we doubt not that infinite power, which knows nothing of hinderance or imperfection, shall find exercise in infinite benevolence.

And as to mercy; — what prevents a finite being from the exercise of mercy? Compassion is amiable; pity is praiseworthy; to forgive is sweet. Why does it seem otherwise to finite man? Because of his weakness. His weakness joins with his self-desire of his own ease and good, and he will not have mercy on others for fear he shall thereby wrong himself. He is slow to forgive, and prefers to revenge, because he thinks that by his forgiveness his adversary would get the advantage of him. But so it cannot be with God. Infinite power leaves nothing to be desired or feared; and mercy may be abundant and forgiveness free, and yet no divine right jeoparded, no advantage gained over the Sovereign of the universe. It is only weakness that tramples on the fallen, or revenges itself on the wrong-doer.

It is sometimes said, that the Deity cannot *pardon*, in any proper sense of that merciful word; since to do so would interfere with the established laws of the universe, and would prove an encouragement to their violation. But this is reasoning too closely from the analogy of human governments. They are founded in weakness; the divine government is founded in power; and therefore there is an essentially different view to be taken on this subject. "No government could stand for a day," it is said, "which should

freely extend pardon to the penitent transgressor of its law." But this is true only because government is ignorant and weak. Human governments may find it dangerous to pardon, for want of power to prevent the ill consequences referred to. But no such reason affects the divine government; there is ample power to guard against all ill consequences; and no mercy need be withheld from the penitent through any apprehension of invading the dignity of the lawgiver, or encouraging the violation of the law. That dignity is beyond the reach of being affected by finite disobedience, and that law is safe in the keeping of almighty power. It is only weakness which dares not forgive. Power glories in forgiving.

Thus it is plain that the possession of almighty power implies the attributes of spirit, justice, and goodness. It would not be difficult to proceed, with aid of this quadruple alliance, and show how the whole circle of the divine attributes is in like manner bound together by an indissoluble bond; creating a perfection from which no ray could ever be removed, and which the human mind, as it adores, may acknowledge to be infinitely complete, though it in vain may endeavor fully to comprehend.

For though we may describe, we do not comprehend. Who can by searching find out God? who find out the Almighty to perfection? The finite cannot measure the infinite. But we can apprehend, though we may not measure; we may reverence and love, though we fall far short of the celestial vision. Indeed, the divine incomprehensibility and infinity, so far from being reasons why we should avoid the contemplation, are rather reasons why we should seek it; they expand and try our faculties. They elevate, spiritualize, and purify our thoughts. The more this contemplation is indulged the more it is relished, and the religious and

spiritual culture of our nature seems more and more worthy. Our worship, that great duty, becomes more intellectual, more fervent, more profound, more happy, when we come from such long and thoughtful musings on its mysterious and gracious object. Our reverence of mind — that rightful and salutary position from which the vulgar things of this life would deter us — becomes an habitual and settled state, if we live in the thoughtful recognition of these divine attributes. And our whole character, its temper, its expression in words and in acts, as felt by ourselves, as perceived by others, will grow more and more into the true form, assimilating to that goodness, truth, and love, which it adores in God, till it wears the likeness of what it contemplates. Thus it is that the man of devout mind makes progress. He walks with God, and therefore walks upward. His whole life is thoughtful, his spirit obedient, his heart trustful and cheerful ; in the brightest day gratefully humble, in the darkest hopeful ; rejoicing in all that is ; prepared for all that may be.

Acquaint thyself, therefore, with God, and be thus at peace. And may that peace which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God.

SERMON III.

THE PERSONALITY OF THE DEITY.

JEREMIAH X. 10.

HE IS THE LIVING GOD, AND AN EVERLASTING KING.

In treating the doctrine respecting God, the mind is deeply impressed with the sense of its importance in its bearing on human duty and happiness. It is the doctrine of a Creator, the Governor and Father of man. The discussion relates not merely to the laws of the universe, and the principles by which its affairs are directed, but to the character and dispositions of the Being who presides over those laws, and by whose will those affairs are determined. It teaches, not only that there is a wise and holy order, to which it is for every man's interest to conform, but that that order is ordained and upheld by an active, overruling Intelligence; and that hence virtue is not merely conformity to a rule, but allegiance to a rightful Lawgiver; and happiness not the result merely of obedience to a command, but of affectionate subjection to a Parent.

The importance of this consideration to a true and happy virtue cannot be over-estimated. The difference between conformity to a statute and obedience to a father is a difference not to be measured in words, but to be realized in the

experience of the soul. It is slightly represented in the difference between the condition of a little child that lives in the presence of a judicious and devoted mother, an object of perpetual affection, and of another that is placed under the charge of a public institution, which knows nothing but a set of rules. Each is alike provided for and governed; but the one enjoys the satisfactions of a trusting and loving heart, while the other, deprived of the natural objects of affection, knows nothing but a life of order and restraint. Take away the Father of the universe, and, though every ordinance remain unchanged, mankind becomes but a company of children in an orphan asylum; clothed, fed, governed, but objects of pity rather than congratulation, because deprived of those resting-places for the affections, without which the soul is not happy.

Our representations of the being and perfections of God are therefore incomplete, until we have taken into consideration the additionable view now suggested. The idea of personality must be added to that of natural and moral perfection, in order to the full definition of the Deity. Without this, he is but a set of principles or a code of laws. Yet by some philosophers, at various times, it has been speculatively denied, and by too many in common life it is practically lost sight of. It may be well, then, in connection with our preceding discussion, to consider a little particularly the doctrine of the divine personality; to state what it is; to show the grounds on which it is established; and to survey the evils which must result from a denial of it.

I begin with stating what is meant by the personality of the Deity.

A *person* is an intelligent, conscious agent; one who thinks, perceives, understands, wills, and acts. What we assert is, that God is such. It is not implied that any dis-

tinct form or shape is necessary to personality. In the case of man, the bodily form is not the person. That form remains after death; but we no longer call it a person, because consciousness and the power of will and of action are gone. The personality resided in them. So also in the case of the Deity; consciousness, and the power of will and of action, constitute him a person. Shape, form, or place, makes no part of the idea.

The evidence of this fact is found in the works of design with which the universe is filled. They imply forethought, plan, wisdom, a designing mind; in other words, an Intelligent Being, who devised and executed them. If we suppose that there is no conscious, intelligent person, we may say that there is no plan, no purpose, no design; there is nothing but a set of abstract and unconscious principles. And strange as it may seem, to Christian ears, which have been accustomed to far other expressions of the Divinity, there have been those who maintain this idea; who hold, that the principles which govern the universe constitute the Deity; that power, wisdom, veracity, justice, benevolence, are God; that gravitation, light, electricity, are God. Speculative men have been sometimes fond of this assertion, and in various forms have set up this opposition to the universal sentiment; sometimes with the design of removing the associations of reverence and worship, which make men religious; sometimes under the supposition that they thereby elevate the mind to a conception of the truth more worthy of its exalted subject. But it will be evident, upon a little inquiry, that, in either case, the speculation is inconsistent with just and wholesome doctrine.

1. For, in the first place, one of the most observable and least questionable principles, drawn from our observation of man and nature, is, that the person, the conscious being, is

the chief thing, for the sake of which all else is, and subservient to which all principles operate. The person, the conscious, intelligent, active, enjoying, suffering being, is foremost in importance and honor; principles and laws operate for its support, guidance, and well-being, and therefore are secondary. Some of these principles and laws have their origin in the relations which exist amongst intelligent, moral agents; most of them come into action in consequence of the previous existence of those relations. If there were no such agents, there either would be no such principles, or they would have no operation. Thus, for example, veracity, justice, love, are sentiments or obligations which spring up from the relations subsisting between different beings, and can exist only where there are persons. We may say, indeed, that they exist abstractly, in the nature of things; but, if there be no beings to recognize them, no agents to conform to or violate them, they would be as if they were not. They are qualities of being, and, like all qualities, have no actual existence independent of the substances in which they inhere. They have relation to acts, — voluntary acts of truth, justice, goodness; and acts belong to persons. If there existed no persons in the universe, but only things, there could be neither the act nor the sentiment of justice, goodness, truth; these are qualities of persons, not of things; of actions, not of substances. Suppose the Deity to exist alone in the universe which he has made. Then, from the conscious enjoyment of his own perfections, and the exercise of his power in the physical creation, he must dwell in bliss; but, as he has no relations to other conscious existences, he cannot exercise justice, or truth, or love; they lie in the infinite bosom as if they were not; they have only a contingent existence. But the instant he should *create* various tribes, they spring into actual existence; they no longer may be, they

are; they rise out of the new relations which are created, and are the expression of sentiments and duties which had not before been possible.

Or make another supposition. Upon the newly-created earth one man is placed alone. He knows no other conscious existence but himself. What are truth, justice, charity, to him? They are nothing to him. He cannot have ideas of them. They are sentiments that belong to certain relations between beings, which relations he does not stand in, and knows nothing of. To him, therefore, they do not exist. Now, send him companions, and the relations begin, which give those sentiments birth and make their expression possible. He is in society; and those principles, which make the strength and order of society, immediately come into action. The necessities of conscious being call them forth.

Thus what is chiefest in the universe is conscious, active mind; abstract principles are but the laws of its various relations.

This may be illustrated, if necessary, from the analogies of the physical universe. Which is chief, the law of gravitation, or the universe which it sustains? The one is but means, the other is end; and the end is always greater than the means. If you say, "No; gravitation is the superior, because it is the universal power of God;" then I reply, "You thereby assent to the superiority of the person over the principle; for, as his power, it is his servant; he controls and directs it." But if you take the other ground, and speak of gravitation as a power independent of any being, then you cannot deny that it exists and is active for the sake of the systems and their inhabitants; operating for their sake, it is their servant and inferior; without them, it would be inert and non-existent. Thus the analogy of the physical universe corroborates the position. If there were no material masses,

there could be no gravitation; if there were no persons, there could be no truth, or justice, or love.

There is another way of considering this point. What is it that, in the whole history and progress of man, has proved most interesting to man? What has been the favorite study, the chief subject of contemplation and care? Has it not been men, persons? Have not their character, fortunes, words, deeds, been the chief themes of thought, of conversation, of letters, of arts? Is it not the interest which the soul takes in persons that is the foundation of society, of its activity, its inventions, its advancement in civilization, its institutions, its laws? And what is the happiness of human life? From the moment that the conscious infant opens its eyes to the mother's smile, and comes to the perception of her care and love, through all the years of filial and fraternal satisfaction, the confidence of friendship, the delights of love, the endearments of home, and the honors and toils of manhood, until the death-bed of weary age is brightened by the kindness of faithful affection, — what, through the whole, is the happiness of life, but this connection with kindred beings? Where has the heart rested, through all, but on the bosom of those whose personal interests were one with its own? We cannot cast this slightest glance upon life, without perceiving the place which belongs to personality; for take it away, and the whole of that beautiful scene vanishes; sympathy, friendship, love, all social enjoyment, all social life, are annihilated.

Thus the doctrine which denies personality to God is in opposition to the general economy of nature, which, as we have seen, sets peculiar honor on persons. In all the other relations of its being, the soul is concerned with nothing so much. Why should it be less so in its highest relation?

2. It also, in the next place, amounts to a virtual denial of

God. Indeed, this is the only sense in which it seems possible to make that denial. No one thinks of denying the existence of principles and laws. Gravitation, order, cause and effect, truth, benevolence, — no one denies that these exist; and, if these constitute the Deity, he has not been, and cannot be, denied. The only denial possible is by this exclusion of a personal existence. There can be no atheism but this; and this is atheism. If the material universe rests on the laws of attraction, affinity, heat, motion, still all of them together are no Deity; if the moral universe is founded on the principles of righteousness, truth, love, neither are these the Deity. There must be some Being to put in action these principles, to exercise these attributes. To call the principles and the attributes *God*, is to violate the established use of language, and confound the common apprehensions of mankind. It is in vain to hope by so doing to escape the charge of atheism; there is no other atheism conceivable. There is a personal God, or there is none.

We reason, in this case, as in that of a man. Man was made in the image of God. But when we have described so much power, wisdom, goodness, so much beauty, justice, truth, love, we have not described a man; the very essential element is wanting; without adding personality, we may speak of these qualities forever, and they will not make a man. So, too, we may enlarge them infinitely, but unless we add personality, they will never make up the idea of God.

3. Further: to exclude personality from the idea of God, is, in effect, to destroy the object of worship, and thus to annihilate that essential duty of religion. The sentiment of reverence may, undoubtedly, be felt for a principle, for a code of laws, for an institution of government. But worship, which is the expression of that sentiment, is applicable only to a conscious being, as all the language and customs of

men signify. It is praise, thanks, honor, and petition, addressed to one who can hear and reply. If there be no such one, — if the government of the world be at the disposal of unconscious power and self-executing law, — then there can be no such thing as worship.

Let this be seriously considered. What a desolation is wrought in society, and in the soul, when the foundation of worship is thus taken away! It is the suppression of a chief instinct; it is the overthrow of a system which has always made an inseparable part of the social order, and in which human character and happiness are intimately concerned. The relation of man, in his weakness and wants, to a kindred spirit infinitely ready to aid him, of the insufficient child of earth to a watchful Father in heaven, is destroyed. There remains no mind, higher than my own, which is knowing to my desires; there is no Parent above, to whom my affections can rise and find peace. I am left to myself, and to men as weak as myself. If, following the impulses of my heart, and the example of good men, I call on One who cares for me and will bless, — I am driven back, and my heart is chilled by the reply, "The power that is over all sustains and guides; but, having no personality, it cannot appreciate affection, nor give it back in return; be satisfied to reverence and submit." And so the filial spirit is mocked; — as if the little child, with its full heart longing for the embrace of its absent mother, should be told, "That mother is but an idea, not a person; you may think of her, but you can have no intercourse with her; be satisfied with this." And this poor substitute for the dearest of the heart's inestimable privileges, is what philosophy would impose on man in the place of a sympathizing Father.

We must not consent to the injustice which is thus done to the affections. What an instinct is in them, and how

they yearn for something to love and trust, is taught us in all the religious history of the race. From this cause men so multiplied their divinities, that, from amid that great diversity, every variety of human soul might find its want of sympathy supplied. Hence, too, in the Catholic church, the worship of the Virgin; because, in the love for that beautiful and spotless person, was found a gratification that the heart is always seeking. And yet, in the face of this great instinct of humanity, every where manifested, Philosophy steps forth, and insists that the soul is to be satisfied with abstractions; as if human nature were any thing without its affections! as if a man were a man, without his heart! as if to deny and baffle them were not to pour bitterness into the very fountain of the soul's peace! And this is done, whenever man is made to believe that the altar at which he kneels is consecrated to a set of principles, and not to a "living God."

4. In the next place, this notion removes the sense of responsibility, and so puts in jeopardy the virtue of man, as we have just seen that it trifles with his happiness. The idea of responsibility implies some one to whom we are responsible, and who has a right to treat us according to our fidelity. We, indeed, sometimes use the word with a little different application; we say that a man is responsible to his country, to posterity, to the cause of truth; but this is plainly employing the word in a secondary sense; it is not the original, literal signification. We hear it said, also, that a man is responsible to his own conscience; and this is sometimes spoken of as the most solemn responsibility. In one point of view, justly; since it is responsibility to that person, whose disapprobation is nearest to us, and whose awards are of the highest consequence to our peace. We are not, therefore, to speak lightly of the tribunal within the breast. But why is it terrible? Because it is thought to represent and fore-

shadow the decisions of the higher tribunal of God. Let a man believe that it is ultimate, and he can learn to brave it; and how many, accordingly, have hardened themselves against it, and persevered in sin, as if it were not! Or let him think that the retributions of guilt are simply the accomplishment of natural laws, which go on mechanically to execute themselves, unattended by any sentiment of approbation or disapprobation, and he can, without great difficulty, defy them. They do not address his moral sensibility. This is the case with the improvident, the miserly, the intemperate; they are perfectly aware that grievous ill consequences will pursue their folly, yet they are not restrained thereby; if they have a mind to risk them, whose concern is it? they will judge for themselves what makes their happiness. But, if they had been made sensible to the disapprobation of a living Father, if they had realized that the sentence against their iniquities was to be executed by him, to whom they owe every thing, then they would have paused in their bad career.

And this is agreeable to what takes place under our daily observation. What could not be effected by all the experience of evils following in the natural train of events, has, in thousands of instances, been at once brought about by the powerful thought of the divine Being who observes and judges. Many a man, long familiar with crime, who had been only exasperated and hardened by the natural consequences which plagued him in his pursuit, has been touched, alarmed, subdued, converted, by coming to the knowledge of that gracious Sovereign, who holds all destiny in his hands, and who sent his Son to bring his wayward children home. It is idle to talk to men in general of responsibility, without directing them to the Being to whom the account is to be rendered. It is the thought of the living Lawgiver and

Judge which affects them, — of one whose displeasure they can dread, whose good opinion they can value, whose favor they perceive to be life. And herein is perceived the wisdom of the gospel of Christ, herein is found its efficacy, — that, casting aside all such abstractions, it appeals wholly to the relations of conscious beings, and subdues, and reforms, and blesses, by drawing the human soul to the soul of its Savior and its God.

5. If, now, we pass to the declarations of the divine Word, we find that the doctrine we are opposing stands in direct contradiction to the whole language and teaching of the Old and the New Testaments. Those volumes speak of God, uniformly and distinctly, as possessed of personal attributes. They so describe his perfections and his government, they so recite his words and his acts, they so assign to him the relations and titles of the Creator, King, Lawgiver, Father, — that no reader could so much as dream that his name is used simply to express the principles and laws of the universe. To fancy it, is to make Scripture unintelligible, and set at nought its express authority. Until language changes its meaning, and all description is falsified, the doctrine of the divine impersonality is a direct contradiction of the doctrine of revelation.

6. Further still: it destroys the possibility of a revelation, in any intelligible sense of the word. A revelation is a message, or a direct communication, from the infinite mind to the human mind. But, in order to this, there is required a conscious and individual action on the part of the communicator; and this implies personality. So that this doctrine virtually accuses the Scriptures of imposture, since they purport to contain a revelation from God, which, in the nature of things, is impossible. Nay, let us see the worst of it; — it accuses the apostles of Christ, and the blessed

Savior himself, of deliberate fraud and imposition; since they and he declared, with the most solemn asseverations, that he was directly sent by God, the Father of mankind, when, if there be no such Being, but only certain principles and laws, he could not have been sent by him. Their language, in that case, is altogether deceptive. It seems to mean one thing, when it really means something quite the reverse. When Jesus declares, again and again, that he came from the Father, and speaks his word, he does not intend what the words assert, but only what is equally true, in a degree, of all men. He was merely giving utterance to thoughts poured into his mind by the everlasting stream which flows into all minds. There was nothing special in his case, excepting, that, as he was purer and better than other men, his thoughts were higher and purer. They were from God in the same sense in which any man's thoughts are from God, — Plato's, Mahomet's, Luther's; they have the same authority; that is, no authority beyond what lies in their own evident truth: the doctrine of Plato or Mahomet, of Luther or Confucius, is just as divine, and just as authoritative, if it but recommend itself as strongly to my mind; and a holy thought of Fenelon or Swedenborg is as truly a divine revelation, as the gospel of Christ. This is the result at which the doctrine arrives. It destroys the possibility of a revelation in any sense which makes it peculiar and valuable, by making all truth a revelation, and all men revealers. It takes away all special divinity and authority from the gospel, reduces it to a level with any other wisdom, and thus robs it of its power over the earth. Its pure and holy author becomes a pretender; for he professed to be sent from God, and to bring his message; he worshiped him, and spake of holding continual personal intercourse with him; and by such means he gained a hearing and an influence among

men, — gained them, however, only by deceiving the world, if there be, after all, no personal God.

By thus tracking this doctrine through its various bearings, and observing its tendencies, we come to a clear discernment of its falseness and mischievousness. We see that it opposes what is taught in nature by all the marks of design which cover the works of creation; — it sets aside the fundamental fact, that conscious, intelligent being, in its various relations, is the chief interest of the universe, for the sake of which every thing else is; — it is a virtual denial of God, and a consequent overthrow of worship and devotion; — it injures happiness by taking from the affections their highest object, and virtue by enfeebling the sense of responsibility; — it contradicts the express lessons of the Bible, excludes the possibility of a revelation in any proper sense of the word, and denies to the gospel its right to authority and power.

Of course, it will not happen that all these disastrous consequences will follow from this doctrine in the case of every individual who may receive it. To the pure all things are pure; and some men will dwell forever in the midst of abstraction and falsehood without being injuriously affected. Express infidelity is not vice, and may exist together with great integrity and purity of life. Atheism is not immorality, and may consist with an unblemished character. But, however it may be with individuals, living in the midst of a believing and worshiping community, it is not to be doubted that a community, unbelieving and godless, would rush to evil unmitigated and hopeless. A philosopher here and there, by his science and skill, might perhaps live without the sun; but, strike it out from the path of all men, and despair and death ensue.

On this subject, then, we are first to look for the truth, and then at the consequences of denying it. And those

consequences, we are to remember, may flow as certainly from a practical disregard of it, as from a speculative rejection. It is possible by the mouth to profess God, and in works to deny him. The number of those who can be misled by the ingenuity of an imaginative mind, is comparatively small; but the world is crowded with those who become aliens from God through the hardening influences of a worldly career, while they fancy themselves to know and acknowledge him as he is. On this account, the views of the present discourse ask the serious regard of all men. For who can doubt, that, among the causes which produce in society so much moral and religious deadness, this is one — that men satisfy themselves with referring to the laws and principles of nature, and stop short of that Being in whom they reside? How much is this a habit amongst us! We talk of the "laws of our being," and of living by them, and of the consequences of violating them, as we should talk of a machine, or of fate. We thus throw out of view the agency and love of the living God, whose children we are, and claim relationship to inanimate abstractions. According to the common phrase, we stop at second causes. And in so doing, we not only wrong the truth, which is thus denied, but defraud ourselves of that exercise and enjoyment of the thinking, affectionate spirit, in which our highest action and bliss are to be found. This ought not so to be. And until men come more to realize the presence and the authority of the living Father, who governs them now, and who will judge them in the end, it is vain to hope for any wider prevalence of elevated piety or of happy devotion to duty.

SERMON IV.

THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.—MIRACLES.

JOHN III. 2.

RABBI, WE KNOW THAT THOU ART A TEACHER COME FROM GOD; FOR NO MAN CAN DO THESE MIRACLES THAT THOU DOEST, EXCEPT GOD BE WITH HIM.

I TAKE these words for a text at this time, because they express, in simplest form, the truth that *the working of miracles is conclusive evidence of a divine mission.* It was so, it seems, to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who here expresses the common judgment of men. It was so to the blind beggar restored to sight, who reasoned with the chief men who cavilled. "*If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*" It was also to the evangelist, when he wrote, "*Though he did so many miracles, yet they believed not;*" implying that they refused a sufficient testimony. It was so to Peter, when, addressing the Jews, he declared that Jesus was "*a man approved of God by miracles, and signs, and wonders.*" It was so esteemed by Jesus himself; when he showed his miracles to the disciples of John, in answer to their inquiries whether he were the Messiah; and when he said to the Jews, "*The works that I do bear witness of me;*" and again, "*If ye believe not me, yet believe the works.*" This proposition, thus sanctioned by so various

testimony, I take for the foundation of what is now to be said on the subject of miracles; in which I am to complete our consideration of the divine government as manifested in special interposition for the instruction and guidance of mankind. Having seen,* in the morning, how it operated by *inspiration* and *prophecy*, we are now to observe how it acts in *miracles*. I treat the great subject only in those points of view which bear upon the present discussion. And accordingly my statement will embrace the three heads of their *nature*, their *credibility*, their *uses*.

I. Their *Nature*. — A miracle is an act beyond the power of man to perform; an event out of the established course of nature — such as is an exception to its known laws, and can be accounted for only by the express interposition of divine power. There is a certain order established in nature — deeds are done, and events take place agreeably to a fixed law of succession. There is a certain limit to human power, and to the operation of all known powers. Whatever takes place within these limits, is agreeable to the course of nature; whatever transcends these limits, transcends the course of nature, and is a miracle. Thus, that the command of a man should affect the wills of a multitude of men, and lead them to execute his pleasure, is agreeable to the fixed order of nature; but that the command of a man should cause the river to divide, or the tempest to cease, is opposed to the order of nature, and, being done, is miraculous — referable to the immediate interposition of divine power.

It is, however, sometimes said, that the case is otherwise; "there is, and can be, no infringement on the order of nature; these apparent exceptions, and sometimes violations, of natural laws, are only instances of the action of higher

* This Discourse was one of a series on the Divine Government. See note, page 53.

laws." If it be meant by this that they are in conformity with the highest principles of action in the divine mind, and in harmony with his universal will and immutable purpose, the remark is just. It never was supposed that in the interruptions of the laws established upon earth, the divine Being acted from caprice, or that he violated the paramount laws of his own nature. The supposition would be monstrous, and finds no countenance in the doctrine of miraculous interference. But if it be meant that the miracles of the New Testament take place agreeably to some law perpetually operating, whose operation is always to be witnessed under similar circumstances, then there are two things to be said in reply — (1) that this is a mere gratuitous supposition, an assertion without foundation; of which it can only be said, it can never be disproved nor proved; an assertion of no weight, because built on ignorance. We can at best say, *we do not know but it may be so;* which is no ground whatever for assuming that it is so. And, (2) allowing it to be so, it does not remove in any degree the proper miraculous character of the act. It is still the suspension of a known law of nature by the unexpected and unaccountable interposing of some unknown and superior law of nature. How is it that that unknown law is thus, at this particular juncture, suddenly interposed? Who causes this irruption upon the established order, by a higher order, which till now never broke in? It can only be answered, "It is by the express and special will of the Lord of both orders, who, to accomplish a certain special end, has bidden the one do the unwonted work of trespassing on the other."

To insist, therefore, that a miracle is no miracle in the common sense, but only a natural event, is to assert, (1) what is incapable of proof, because of human ignorance; (2) what is contradicted by all appearances; (3) what still

leaves the question of supernatural action on the part of the Author of nature unaffected.

But it is added, further, that "we are not thus ignorant; we know and are familiar with that higher law. It is the operation of *faith*. The Savior appealed to the faith of those whom he healed; and it is the agency of that principle of the mind, by which his mighty works were done — a principle whose action is familiar to us in the history of life; accomplishing a thousand wonders." "Mind," it is said, "is by nature sovereign over matter. The human mind has a vast, acknowledged, unmeasured power over the body it inhabits. That power lies in its faith, which gives energy to its will; and as, in various diseases, the energy thus existing has helped to work a remarkable cure, so the energy of the excitement, the passion, the expectation, wrought in the mind by faith in Christ, accounts for the wonders which followed his words and his touch." The law of faith is that higher natural law to which miracles are referred.

The difficulties in the way of such an hypothesis as this are so insurmountable, that it is hard to see how it can stand, for a moment, in any reasoning mind. I name but two or three.

In the first place, it destroys all the value of miracles as testimonies to the divine mission of him who works them — while yet our Savior constantly appealed to them as such. "It is the natural power of faith." But that faith may be as confident and ardent in the mind of one who is deluded, as of one who is right. A mere fanatic may have confidence in his own inspiration, and may instil it into his followers, and may therefore think to work miracles. There have been instances of this; the individuals no more doubted, and their followers no more doubted, their divine commission and their miraculous power, than did Christ and his disciples doubt his. If the natural power of faith were all, why did

they fail? When, with fasting, and prayer, and tears, and long waiting, they endeavored, why did not the expected event follow, if the natural power of faith were the wonder-worker?

Again; if it were so, it would operate wherever there was faith — in one age of the world as well as another. But, in point of fact, it has been confined to certain seasons, when there was a great crisis in human affairs, and a special movement to be made in the advancement of the world. This, of itself, intimates something else than the natural action of a universal principle. But, further, it is not possible to suppose that all strong faith was limited to those eras; that when, at that time, many were able to exercise and receive that power, at other times, not one individual of equal faith should arise in the course of centuries. It is not conceivable that, in the day of Christ, when the twelve and the seventy were still possessed with the error that he came as a temporal monarch, their faith should be, notwithstanding, equal to miraculous works, and that never since that age, any holy man, with a corrected faith, — not one of the reformers, not one of the martyrs, nor one of the saints, — should have possessed a faith equal to such works. In view of this historical fact, it were as reasonable to attribute the mighty works of Christ to the climate of Palestine, as to the native power of faith.

But it is alleged that our Savior himself teaches this doctrine. He demanded faith as a condition of being healed. — "*If thou believest: every thing is possible to him that believeth. If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed—*" thus attributing his works to the efficacy of this principle. A slight examination will show that his language implies nothing of this sort. The cases, you perceive, are twofold; the one, that of the disciples, who must have faith in

order to work miracles; the other, that of the sufferers, who must have faith in order to be healed.

As to the disciples, the case is very plain. They were to possess the gift of miracles in order to spread his religion. That religion could have no progress, except through faith that Jesus was the Messiah, commissioned from God to teach that religion. Now, *of course*, the credentials would be bestowed only on those who thus believed; and accordingly, the Master promised it to their faith. Promised what? *That their faith should act according to a natural law?* No; but that the Father would grant them this special power, to accredit and accomplish their ministry. The idea is fully brought out in such passages of the New Testament as the following: "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say to this mountain, Remove hence, and be cast into the sea." "Whatever ye shall ask in my name, believing, ye shall receive." And again, "He that believeth in me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father;" and, "Whatever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." The promise, therefore, was a special promise of immediate gift from God, in answer to their prayer and faith. And accordingly James writes, "The *prayer of faith shall heal the sick.*" Faith has power, because it prompts to earnest prayer, and God answers that prayer by doing the miracles.

Then, as to the case of those of whom faith was required as a condition of being healed; it is important to remark, *first*, that it does by no means appear to have been a universal condition. We have a particular narrative of thirty-two miracles, including the transfiguration and the voice in the temple. In regard to twenty-three of these, not a syllable is said or implied respecting faith. In the other nine, faith is sometimes mentioned, and sometimes directly im-

plied; but it is required, as a condition or preliminary, by our Lord, in only *one* certainly, perhaps in two:* the miracle is described as a *reward* of faith in four instances; and in four instances it was not the faith of the individual benefited, but of others. The assertion, therefore, that our Lord demanded faith as the prerequisite of a miracle, is unsustained.

In the other twenty-three instances, we are led sometimes into violent absurdities, by adopting the supposition in question; as in the case of the centurion's son, healed at a distance, through the faith of his father — the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman, under similar circumstances — the demoniacal boy, while racked and insensible in convulsions — the stilling of the storm, and the multiplying of the loaves — and other instances, in which faith, if attributed to any, must have been excited either in inanimate objects or in a third person. And again, the reason why any regard was had to faith, in the working of cures, directly or indirectly, is sufficiently plain, without resorting to the conjecture to which I have alluded — viz., that our Lord's great purpose was not, primarily, the conferring of these temporal blessings of relief and mercy; but it was a spiritual purpose, a religious and moral impression. Faith is the germ, the principle, of all moral and religious character: it was made, by him and his apostles, the foundation of the religious system; and therefore, as a spiritual benefactor, he was solicitous to impart *that*, as the great and leading blessing, as the beginning of the new life of his kingdom. Therefore it was that he spoke of faith; not as a condition of being benefited, but in connection with it, as a good opportunity of moral impression. This

* Matt. ix. 28. Mark. ix. 23.

is made evident in the history of the man born blind, the details of whose miraculous cure are given with more minuteness than in any other instance. Our Lord performed the cure without saying a word to him concerning faith — nay, *without the blind man knowing who he was.* But afterwards, our Lord, meeting him, and wishing to add a religious lesson, *then*, when his grateful mind was ready to receive it, he inculcated on him the duty of faith. Read this in the ninth chapter of John, and you will see that it wholly invalidates the theory in question. Look also at the history of the impotent man, at the pool of Bethesda. He was healed without knowing Jesus; of course without believing in him, and no faith was demanded of him; but a lesson of moral warning was added after the cure, when Jesus met him in the Temple; all which goes to show, that the reason why faith was demanded, was not that it might operate by a law of nature to the individual cure, but for the purpose of a moral and religious impression on the soul.

It is still said, however, that in these instances in which faith is not demanded of the sufferer, or in which the action is upon inanimate substances, "*the miracle is wrought by the faith in the mind of Christ.*" To this assertion it is only necessary to reply, that it is mere supposition. We are nowhere so informed. Not an expression occurs in the New Testament, from which it could be guessed that he, or his apostles, ever attributed his works to the natural power of his own faith. His faith is never spoken of in this connection, nor in any connection. And still more, he claims, again and again, in express terms, to do the miracles by the immediate power of God. "My Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." And the apostle distinctly says, "He was a priest approved of God by the miracles, and

signs, and wonders, *which God did by him.*" In the face of these decided declarations of holy writ, it will not do to set up the conjecture, that it was all the natural energy of Christ's faith.

If it should be said, that the other idea is still countenanced by passages like that which asserts that "he could not do many miracles, because of their unbelief," — the answer is obvious. Not believing, they would not offer themselves to his touch, and thus he, having no opportunity, could not, of course, do many miracles.

There is, therefore, nothing in the language of the New Testament, respecting faith, to overturn the common idea, that miracles are supernatural acts of divine Providence, wrought for special purposes, and not the natural consequence of a believing mind; and that, by God's wisdom, they are fitted for the accomplishment of the great end for which they have been used; viz., the introduction and establishment in the world of a new dispensation of religion. Thus much of their nature.

II. Secondly, of their *Credibility.* — Upon this head there are four remarks to be made.

1. To those who acknowledge a divine Providence, which cares for men, and directs the progress of events for men's advantage and well-being, there is an *antecedent* credibility: there is, on the whole, to their minds, rather a probability in their favor, than against them. Here is a vast plan of beneficence to be carried to its result, by the Father of men; and if, in order to its accomplishment, any greater light or aid should at any time be needed, than is possessed by his children, it would seem to become a gracious Parent to bestow it; the promotion of the great end would seem to be more worthy of regard, than a servile adherence to a certain order. It is more difficult to explain why the great

Father does not interpose oftener, than to believe that he has interposed sometimes.

2. But, then, secondly, it is said, "that, in the experience of the world, this interposition does not take place: all experience is against miracles; so much so, that no testimony could prove them; — it would always be more probable that the testimony is false, than that the miracle was fact." This is a celebrated objection. But, taken as urged by Hume, who is regarded as its inventor, it has two fatal flaws. (1.) It begs the question. It asserts that miracles are contrary to universal experience; when the very question is, whether or not they have been met with in human experience. That question is to be decided on its own merits; and the inquiry is not to be foreclosed and stifled, by an assertion that experience has already determined it. (2.) And, secondly, so conscious of this did Hume himself seem to be, that he went on to admit (I use his own words) that "there may possibly be miracles or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit a proof from human testimony; though perhaps it will be impossible to find any such in all the records of history." Here, then, he abandoned his own ground, and thereby shows that he took the ground only in the way of opposition to religion; for he adds, "A miracle can never be so proved, as to be the foundation of a system of religion, for otherwise there possibly may be miracles." Now, this is all the concession which can be demanded in the argument; since it is easy to see that this very cause, why, in his view, a miracle cannot be, is the strongest cause imaginable why a miracle should be. It never could be, except for some great and good purposes; and what greater or better purpose than the foundation of a system of religion? If there be such a thing as religion, and God designs to instruct

men in it, is it not precisely that emergency, — if I may use the term, — which would justify a miracle, and render it credible? If Hume says, a miracle is capable of proof, provided it do not sustain a system of religion, we may fairly say it is capable of proof the rather, because it does so.

3. If any further refutation of this objection were needed, it might be found in the third remark, to which I now hasten. The miracles of the New Testament are credible, because of the connection in which they are found in the gospel history. They make an essential part of that history; so that they cannot be torn from it without destroying the whole fabric. If this circumstance be duly weighed, it will be perceived to have no light consequences. Here is a volume bearing singular marks, in its whole structure and complexion, of simplicity, honesty, veracity, and the highest integrity and virtue. No book, in these particulars, surpasses it, or has ever been the subject of so much criticism, admiration, and applause, on account of these very qualities. The persons spoken of were devoted, heart and life, soul and body, to the promotion of the most important interests of mankind, and they have recorded there sentiments of religious truth and of moral philosophy worthy of the loftiest and purest minds. These men, thus high-minded, thus consecrated to goodness, thus professing to be, and in fact being, the chief religious teachers and prime benefactors of the earth, declare to us, among the common affairs of their life, — in the same simple and satisfied tone in which they tell of all that befell them, and all that they taught, — that they lived in the midst of miracles, that they witnessed and partook in special manifestations of divine Providence, exhibited for the very purpose of accrediting and establishing the truth they were devoted to; and this in such a way, that you can no more separate the supernatural from their life, and leave them what

they are, than you can pluck the colors from the rainbow, and leave it what it is. The whole stands or falls together. It is all of one piece. If you refuse the miracles, you falsify the words and the life of the most pure and disinterested men that ever toiled for the sake of humanity. If you revere the men, and acknowledge their merit, you must admit the miracles. You feel that, with such men, in such a cause, working for such objects, it is not only credible, but probable, almost natural, that God should thus work.

4. This feeling is corroborated by carrying out the view a little further, — as I do now in my fourth remark, — *that gospel history is followed by results wholly unaccountable, excepting on the supposition that these miracles were facts.* For these men, uneducated, simple, and pure as they were, did go out from Jesus, and effect the greatest, the most extensive, the most lasting moral and religious revolution in the history of the race; they did it on the credit and faith of this very miraculous history; they based their whole claim to be heard on these supernatural events; they did gain credence from multitudes on the spot at the time, when their falsehood, if it was such, could have been easily detected — especially as the government attempted to crush them — and they gained credence wherever they went. They established Christianity; established it distinctly and singly on the ground of its supernatural claim, attested by miracles, wrought by their Master, and wrought by themselves. Under these circumstances, are the miracles incredible? Are they not the most credible of all things? Would it not be more wonderful that that whole pretension should be false, than that God should thus attest the foundation of the true religion?

If, then, to believers in divine Providence, there be no antecedent objection to miracles, but the contrary; if the objection from experience be removable; and if all the con-

temporary and subsequent history, confirms and even demands them, — then we may be satisfied of their credibility, and rest happy and firm in our faith.

III. Of their *Uses*, the third point proposed, there is no time now to speak. It must be discussed in a future discourse.

It remains only to say, in conclusion, that, in addressing a Christian congregation, I have had in view the confirmation of faith in believing minds, rather than directed the argument to those who deny a revelation. It is needful, sometimes, to clear up the doubts and misgivings which are thrown upon the faith of the former by loose speculations of philosophical unbelievers, and to turn attention to that practical and decided view which comes from reasoning on what we know, and not on what we are ignorant of.

Reasoning thus, and as becomes short-sighted man; being willing to remain ignorant of much; not unhappy because some things are still unexplained; we discover, in this miraculous dispensation of Heaven, a signal effort toward the accomplishment of a great plan of the divine Government. We see in it a continuance of that system of instruction which was from the beginning of the world, which may be traced in its history through the ages, and which is hastening to its consummation in the universal establishment of the kingdom of Christ and the happiness of man throughout the earth. To this that array of wonderful works aims; to this it has been, in its results, steadfastly tending. Nothing has appeared yet, in the progress of events, likely to frustrate the glorious achievement; nothing has yet prospered permanently against the power of Christ. He who was proved *to be "a teacher from God, because none could do the works that he did unless God were with him,"* is now proved to be the destined sovereign of the earth, by the sure progress of his truth

to universal dominion. The kingdoms of this world are fast becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. Happy will be the earth in that era of his serene and benignant empire! Our eyes shall not see it; but thrice happy we, if, faithful to our light, we shall look down upon that glory of earth from the immortal city of God, and the gladness of eternal day! *

* This and the three following, and the three preceding discourses, were preached as parts of a series on "The Divine Character and Government." The remainder of the series were left too incomplete to be published.

SERMON V.

THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.—MIRACLES.

MATTHEW XI. 2—6.

NOW WHEN JOHN HAD HEARD IN THE PRISON THE WORKS OF CHRIST, HE SENT TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES, AND SAID UNTO HIM, ART THOU HE THAT SHOULD COME, OR DO WE LOOK FOR ANOTHER? JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO THEM, GO AND SHOW JOHN AGAIN THOSE THINGS WHICH YE DO HEAR AND SEE: THE BLIND RECEIVE THEIR SIGHT, AND THE LAME WALK, THE LEPERS ARE CLEANSED, AND THE DEAF HEAR, THE DEAD ARE RAISED UP, AND THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. AND BLESSED IS HE, WHOSOEVER SHALL NOT BE OFFENDED IN ME.

In this passage we are distinctly taught the use which our Savior himself made of the miracles which he wrought. He employs them to satisfy John, who was either doubting or impatient, or both, that he was indeed the expected Messiah. It is a passage, therefore, very suitable to introduce the present discourse, in which I propose to finish the remarks on miracles which were begun in the last. I then spoke of their nature and their credibility. I am now to speak of their uses.

My object will be to show the purpose they were designed to answer in the divine economy, as well at the present day as in the day when they were seen. In doing this, it will be necessary to take notice of some views derogatory to their worth, and of the claim which is some-

times set up to a superior testimony, that renders them of comparatively little consideration.

III. Their *Uses.* — 1. Their obvious and chief use is, that which we have just referred to, and which is spoken of in our text — to accredit a messenger from God — to be a testimony that the individual who claims to be from God is so indeed. This is the purpose for which they are set forth in the Scriptures. It is upon their testimony, thus used, that Moses in the Old Testament, and Christ in the New, grounded their pretensions. Thus, when Moses was first sent, the power was granted, that "they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers hath appeared unto thee." And so also in the New Testament. Our text is a remarkable instance in point. The direct question is put to Christ, "Art thou the man?" How does he answer? "Look at my miracles, and judge for yourselves. 'The works that I do, bear witness that the Father hath sent me.' 'If ye believe not me, believe the works.'" "Many other things did Jesus, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." "Many believed when they saw the miracles he did." "God bore them witness, with signs and with wonders, and with divers miracles." Thus, throughout the Scriptures, this is spoken of as the purpose for which miraculous power was exerted; and no other reason is ever assigned or hinted at. It is not easy to conjecture any other reason. When, indeed, we see the beneficent works thus done, and how great happiness was thus occasioned, we are almost ready to say, that that would be cause enough; but we are immediately met by the thought, that, if it were so, then it is unaccountable that they should be confined to certain periods, and a few persons. The mere conveying healing and peace to a few would be as

worthy an object at one time as at another. But if the intention were the founding of a new dispensation of religion, then the reason is evident at once why he who introduced it should be so armed. It was to prove him to be the divine messenger he claimed to be.

Miracles have been sometimes spoken of as if they were designed to prove the truth of certain doctrines; and it has been objected, that spiritual truth cannot, in the nature of things, be so proved. But there seems to be some confusion in this remark. It never has been pretended, I believe, that this was the purpose of miracles, to prove, directly, spiritual truth, — but indirectly. They prove the divine commission of him who works them; therefore that he has a right to teach; therefore that the doctrine taught by him is true. The argument is not, and never was said to be, "That blind man has received his sight; therefore God will pardon the penitent;" but, Christ is proved, by his acts of superior power, to be from God; being from God, whatever he declares to be the truth of God, is so; he declares that God will forgive the penitent; therefore that doctrine is to be received. The miracles persuade that the teacher is divine, and that therefore the doctrine is true. It converts to that external faith, and that external faith then converts to the Christian life. Paul, by the miracles, is made to believe Christ the messenger; but the operation of Christ's doctrine, afterwards received, makes him a spiritual Christian. It is either very inconsiderate, or very unfair, to pronounce the miracles unnecessary to the Christian faith, because they do not this *interior* work of truth, which they never claimed to do. They claim to establish the authority of Christ and his religion: that is their use. Shall we call them useless because they do not convince of sin, and make devout? That is the proper operation of the truth delivered by the

messenger whose credentials the miracles are. First receive the teacher because thus accredited; then listen to his instructions; then form the character by them.

This, then, being the evident purpose and value of the miracles, their application is plainly twofold — particular and general; — 1. To convince individual spectators of the authority of the teacher; 2. To establish that authority in the world; i. e., to lay the foundation of the new religion. The first of these is necessary to the second. When Christ first appeared, the individuals who saw his works were thereby won to his cause, and, giving due heed to words thus proved to be divine, were made spiritual men. In this way his religion gained a footing and his church became established. When established, other evidences mingled with this. The next generation, not witnessing the miracles, received the doctrine by tradition in childhood, and believed, in consequence of their education, before being of age sufficient to know or judge of the miraculous attestation. This is the case in Christian lands at the present day. The great majority believe through education, and form themselves to a corresponding habit of mind and life. Then, when, in later life, they inquire into the grounds of their belief, they find it resting on a variety of grounds. The catalogue of collateral evidences is very large. To some minds one is of most weight; to some, another. To some, the history of the miraculous facts affords the strongest confirmation; to others, it seems the weakest. But the miraculous origin of the religion, and its miraculous support, is allowed by most; and it is plainly seen, that Christianity, as *a system of religion*, is founded on miracles, and has derived its authority, its strength, its dominion in the world, its influence over mankind, from its supernatural claims; so that even, if, owing to the circumstances of the individual, his education, or his

turn of mind, he should lay little stress on miracles for his own personal conviction, yet he would acknowledge their essential and indisputable value, as the pillars of the Christian system, without which it could not have been reared, nor continue to stand.

This distinction between the use of miracles, as essential to the foundation of the Christian system in the world, and their use as the foundation of individual faith, is important to be observed, because it tends to clear away a misapprehension which has sometimes existed. It has been asked, "Why so urgently insist on faith in miracles? If a man but receive the truth of Christianity, he is a Christian, no matter what he may think of the evidence — even though he reject the evidence of miracles. It is not the reception of the evidence, but the reception of the truth, that makes one a Christian." Now, undoubtedly it may be, that through education, or the other influences of a Christian community, he shall receive and conform to the Christian religion, and thus be intentionally and at heart a Christian, without having founded his faith originally on the testimony of miracles. If this be what is meant, it is only the statement of a familiar fact. But if it be meant that one may study the original grounds of Christianity, and yet deny its miracles, or may assert that they are of no worth in upholding Christianity in the world; it is a statement opposed to all fact, and wholly inconsistent with a sound apprehension of what Christian faith is; since it allows a religion to be introduced and stand in the world, independently of miraculous pretensions, when the most remarkable and distinctive peculiarity in its first history and records is precisely this supernatural claim. How can one justly reverence and have faith in those records, who, professing to receive them, maintains that this peculiarity is of no importance; that their most

remarkable feature may as well not be admitted to belong to them, as to belong to them? i. e., that it is of no consequence whether they truly or falsely pretended to miracles.

The Christian religion is founded on facts. Its principles, and truths, and obligations, are taught through facts, and interpreted by them. The most striking of all these facts, and those with which all the others are indissolubly connected, are miraculous. And it is a strange proposition, indeed, that all the rest are important, and these unimportant. Strike them out of the history, and the first introduction of Christianity is a phenomenon unaccounted for; its claims to peculiar authority are gone; and it inevitably sinks away from its place in the world. If it be not thus certified, there is no proof that it is divine; if not divine, it has not authority; if not authority, comparatively no power; and thus the religion which has done so much to elevate and save mankind, because esteemed divine, passes down to a level with one of the conflicting philosophies, and is as uncertain and as inefficacious as they.

2. In the next place, this use and value of the miracles will further appear, when we reflect that *there is no other possible way by which a revelation can be certified.* This is a momentous reflection, and ought to weigh with those who are disposed to speak lightly of them. It was particularly noticed in our last discourse, and need be only adverted to now.

A revelation is an immediate communication of divine truth to the mind of a man, with the intent that it be by him made known to other men. How shall he know that it is not a delusion of his own excited fancy? How shall other men know that he is not an enthusiast or an impostor? There is no conceivable way, but by some external testimony, independent of himself; and such testimony can only be by miracles.

This is the ground, as we have seen, taken in the Scriptures. They appear to assume that no one is obliged to receive a declaration as from God, unless sustained by some external sign of a divine authority. This position, however, has been objected to; and it is said that there is another criterion far more satisfactory and safe. Some of the friends of Christianity, accordingly, would turn away our faith from its old resting-places, and supply it with a new and broader basis. Their remark consists of two parts — a denial that miracles are the proper confirmation of a revelation, and an assertion that that confirmation is to be found in the character of the revelation. Let us look at each.

1. A divine revelation cannot rest on miracles, because we can know that an act is a miracle only by its being the act of a divine messenger. No miracle could make us believe a bad man from God, or a bad doctrine. It is because the doctrine and the cause seem worthy of God, that we do not reject the work. Therefore we necessarily judge the miracle by the doctrine. How, then, can we believe the doctrine on account of the miracle?

There is something specious in this; but the fallacy is easily exposed. It might fairly be objected, that it is the assumption of an impossibility, and reasoning from it, — which is unwarrantable, — viz., it makes the supposition that a miracle is wrought for a bad purpose. The thing cannot be; and therefore there is no force in any argument founded on it. But especially there is a misapprehension of the actual state of the case. The case is not, that we decide a miracle to be a miracle on this single ground: it is only one test among many. If an act purports to be miraculous, it must be examined; and among the various tests to which it is put, this, of course, is one: Does it oppose the known purpose and character of God? If it do, it

must, of course, be rejected: it is no miracle. But be it observed, — and herein lies the fallacy, — its being found consistent with that purpose and character, does not go one step towards a presumption that it is supernatural. The inference from the character of the doctrine is altogether negative, not at all positive. The doctrine is bad, therefore we deny there is a miracle, is good reasoning; but *this* is not good reasoning — the doctrine is good, therefore we hold there is a miracle. It is no positive proof of the miracle at all. That rests on wholly different grounds, and, being established on other grounds, the consequence is a legitimate and irresistible one, that the doctrine thereby confirmed, having this sanction from God, is divine.

There is, therefore, an evident fallacy in this first part of the position I referred to. Let us see how it is with the second part.

2. This lays the whole stress of the argument for Christianity upon the *character of its doctrines.* It declares that the rational mind sets aside the external and historical testimony, as dry and unsatisfactory, and finds conviction from within alone; that it perceives the divinity of the religion by acquaintance and experience; that it discerns the intrinsic divinity and power, and by this discernment knows it to be from God. The revelation carries its own evidence to the willing and attentive mind, and needs no other. Now, there is a sense in which this statement is to be received. The soul, when in a true state, assents to the Christian doctrine as truth worthy of God, and adapted to the human soul — is conscious of its holiness, heavenliness, and spiritual efficacy. But does that prove that it was sent by a special message from God, and that Christianity was a revelation? It only proves its teachings to be conformed to the soul's best notions of religious truth; but it

does not touch the question, whether Christ communicated them by express authority from Heaven. And that is the question in debate — not whether certain things be true, but whether, being true, they have been *revealed.* We may know by our internal reason that it is truth; but that it is revealed, we can only know by divine testimony.

The internal evidences of Christianity are exceedingly various, and of unspeakable value. Nothing can exceed their beauty and persuasiveness, when laid before a well-disposed mind. They fill and satisfy, and impart a completeness and weight of conviction, which turns all the past and the future of the Christian kingdom into a glowing and present reality. They crown with spiritual confirmation the faith which stands on the historical testimony, and they prepare for that testimony many minds that would otherwise uncandidly reject it. Possessing this inestimable value, it is matter of deep concern that there should be claimed for them an exclusive authority, to the detriment of the evidence of facts, and to the contempt of the original history. Such a claim is neither warrantable nor just; and it in fact takes away the foundation on which the very internal evidence rests. Supported by the supernatural events which ushered in the dispensation, the internal evidence has a force which cannot be gainsaid. But cast doubt upon these events, or say that they are no longer of any moment, and it amounts to little more than a speculation of the understanding and the imagination, which can give no profound satisfaction, because it rests on no basis more solid than the reveries or reasonings of the self-confiding mind. In illustration of this, look at one of the forms which this position assumes.

Thus, — "Christianity is known to be divine by its own features and character: this is the highest and only satisfactory

proof. As we know a work of art — a painting, for instance — to be the production of a certain artist, because it is in the style of that artist's former works, so we know the Christian religion to be from God, because it is in harmony with the works of God; especially in harmony with that chief work of God, the human soul. Its teachings are all conformed to the highest instincts and best reflections of that soul; therefore they are from the same Being who framed the soul."

But the futility of such reasoning is obvious. The very analogy relied on as its basis goes against it. For nothing is more uncertain, as all experience teaches, than this judgment respecting authors from the style of works attributed to them. The history of letters and the arts is full of instances to prove that the acutest and most accustomed criticism may be deceived, and never stands a moment by the side of historical testimony. How liable, then, are men to err in the presumptuous essay to understand and penetrate the work of God in nature and the soul, so as to decide on the style of the great Author of the universe! Who would think of appealing to it as the best evidence, when direct testimony could be had? venturing to judge and determine, from their own critical sufficiency, whether or not Christianity be his work! Not to forget, also, that if such conformity to the soul be alone sufficient to prove Christianity from God, it must equally prove *every system* to be from him which conforms to the soul, and just so far as it conforms. And then we have the result adverted to before: a doctrine is true, therefore divine — approves itself to my higher nature, therefore revealed: therefore there is no truth but what is to be received as revelation: and revelation, in the *received sense* of that word, as any thing express and peculiar, does not exist; or, if it exists, cannot be proved. This is to send

every mind abroad upon the infinite ocean of thought, without compass or chart, to drift about at its pleasure.

We thus see the necessity of keeping a fast hold on the miraculous facts of the gospel history. We see the wisdom of divine Providence in appointing them. They have proved in the world the sufficient foundation of the church, and have caused the truth to spread and prevail. If we abandon them for the sake of a process of reasoning, or an intuitive conviction, we hazard the exchange of what *has been equal to the necessity of man*, for an experiment in philosophy; which never yet has showed itself adequate; which seems no more adapted to the state and wants of man now, than two thousand years ago, when God did not see fit to trust to it. Let us not have confidence in what he rejected. Christianity was impressively authenticated to mankind for the very purpose of delivering us from the speculations of the wise, by substituting facts and authority in their place. Let us not throw away these facts and authority, and return to the speculations which were then displaced. But, planting ourselves on the rock of impassable testimony and supernatural acts, — taking our religion as a religion of facts, primarily, let us on that foundation build up the internal conviction, which, coöperating with the instincts of the soul and the experience of the spiritual life, shall be that church of God *within*, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

Still, the worth of that interior witness to the truth, which grows up from reflection and experience, is never for a moment to be denied. One may be learned as the profoundest sage in all that pertains to the outward testimony, but, if he have not added this, is still far from the kingdom of God. Only let not the witness of the soul be substituted for

the witness of God; and beware lest the personal enjoyments of a glowing spirit lead us to cast contempt on the more cold and unattractive realities of external fact. Each has its own place: neither must thrust aside the other; nor one be disparaged for the sake of exalting the other.

It appears, then, as the result of our discussion, that the uses of miracles may be accounted *four*. 1. They authenticate the divine mission of him who works them; which can in no other way be estimated. 2. They thus introduce and found in the world the Christian system. 3. In the present day, they corroborate to the believer by education, his traditional faith. And, 4. They furnish the basis on which the great internal evidence rests. At first, they were essential, because without them the revelation could not have gained footing; they are still essential, because, though Christian truth might, by education, be welcomed as agreeable to the mind, and therefore true and useful, yet it could not be known to have authority as a revelation; and though an *individual* might live without it, the Christian church would soon come to an end.

But, after all, there is danger lest one should not speak with the necessary discrimination on a subject like this. It is too easy, in vindicating one class of the divine evidence, to derogate from another, and in urging one view of faith as important, to seem to cast slight on another. We must never forget that all truth is consistent with all other truth, and that there is room enough for the action and influence of all. The miracles which introduced the gospel dispensation founded the external kingdom of Christ. Without them it could not stand, and without it, the internal kingdom of the truth would perish. But, at the same time, they may be believed, and the external kingdom honored, and yet the soul be lost. The divine doctrine, the spiritual truth, must be received

and cherished within, and its reviving power over conscience and affections be known, or all outward testimony and faith are vain. Induced, therefore, by the supernatural acts of the Lord, to allow the divine origin of his doctrine, we are not to regard that as enough. That is but a *nominal* Christianity. His doctrine must convert our souls. The outward testimony opened our ears to hear; his truth, which then enters our ears, must subdue our hearts, and make us wholly his.

And it is precisely by this operation, lastly, that these supernatural facts effect their great design in the economy of the divine government. That design is to establish the true religion, and the holiness and happiness of man, throughout the globe. These great facts essentially aid and hasten that design, by establishing the visible kingdom of the truth, and thus providing for men those spiritual influences which shall make them all the faithful children of God. To that consummation we rejoice to believe Christianity aims, and all is tending. The great purpose of God goes on; the gospel spreads; his kingdom comes.

SERMON VI.

THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.—CHARACTER, PROGRESS, AND CONSUMMATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

DANIEL VII. 13.

I SAW IN THE NIGHT VISIONS, AND, BEHOLD, ONE LIKE THE SON OF MAN CAME WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN, AND CAME TO THE ANCIENT OF DAYS, AND THEY BROUGHT HIM NEAR BEFORE HIM.

We have spoken of the divine government under two divisions — 1, by Natural Providence; and, 2, by Special Interposition; and we have seen how the latter is established by inspiration, by prophecy, and by miracles. It remains now to enter more fully into a description of the purposes and modes of operation of this administration, thus specially set up in the midst of men. What has been its operation, and what are to be its results? This is our present subject — its *character*, its *progress*, its *issue*.

I. Its *Character*. The first circumstance to be here remembered is, that there is a plan, system, scheme, which connects the divine purpose from the beginning to the end of time. A series of interpositions in behalf of man is to be traced, mutually dependent on each other, and having a common end in view. This series forms that plan of the divine government of which we are speaking. The record of it is to be found in the Holy Scriptures; and its verification in the history and fortunes of the human race, from

the earliest to the most recent period. Its beginning is dimly seen in the history of the first man. He, having fallen, under the original state of probation, the manner of human probation was thereafter changed. That change was accomplished by a promise, that, although nature had proved itself weak in resolution, and incompetent in virtue, yet it should not finally sink; it should bruise the head of its adversary. In process of time, another step in the development of this plan was seen, when Abraham was summoned from his own land, to plant the seed of a great nation in Canaan — in whom, it was promised, *all the families of the earth should be blest.* Provision was made for the fulfilment of that promise in the education of his family, first in Palestine, and afterwards in Egypt; until, in the fulness of time, his descendants, having grown into a large nation, received a more extensive law by the hand of Moses, and the divine dispensation was established among the Jewish people. By these means the worship of the one God was preserved upon the earth, and the way gradually prepared for its universal extension. By the successful fortunes of that people, and the various teachers of religion raised up to it from time to time, the great scheme was more and more unfolded, and at length the illustrious messenger of the covenant, to whose advent the eyes of the faithful had for ages been directed, appeared, in the form of Jesus Christ. He disclosed yet more fully the spiritual character and immortal purpose of the divine government; erected his church in the world as the great instrument of promoting it, and gave his truth and his instructions to the charge of his disciples. Through eighteen hundred years these have survived, and with various fortunes. According to the fidelity or folly of those who have had them in charge, they have made their way down to the present age, and now

exist on firmer foundations, and under happier auspices, than at any previous period. Thus, from the day of Abraham, through his descendants, by means of the Mosaic institutions, the way was prepared for introducing the dispensation of spiritual truth to all mankind. By the ministry of Christ it was opened to all men, and, through the agency of his church, has been gradually extending itself, with its blessings of religion, civilization, and happiness; giving signs that it will at last fill the world, and that in it shall all the families of the earth be blest.

This is the general plan of the divine dispensation. Why its beneficent purposes have been so slow in coming to their perfect result, we do not pretend to explain. The perfect knowledge of God is too wonderful for us; we are soon lost in amazement, if we attempt to fathom and explore the mysterious mazes of his will. We do, however, know this much — that this gradual disclosure of his religious dispensations is in perfect accordance with his methods in common providence, and with all that we there learn or experience respecting him. Every thing else comes to its perfect issues by degrees; and these degrees are always long and slow in proportion to the excellence of the thing. Every thing else pertaining to man is regulated by general laws, and by accommodation to the nature and will of free moral agents, who are not to be compelled, but to be led by moral motives, and moral suasion, which, in their liberty and their folly, they may long resist. It is not strange, therefore, that the same course should be adopted in regard to man's instruction in religion; and hence it is, that the doctrines of the Bible have so slowly found their way in the world, and that the Christian faith has established but an imperfect dominion among men. But, tardy as it may be in its progress, and partially diffused, Christ's kingdom *stands.*

Its laws are observed; its spirit is in the world, leavening, gradually, the whole mass of mankind; and it is not easy to conceive of any power that shall be able to expel it from society, or set limits to its progress.

It is worthy of observation, in considering the character of the Christian dispensation, that it is called a *kingdom.* This term implies authority and allegiance, laws and obedience. Accordingly, the divine dispensations claim authority, promulgate laws, demand subjection, and enforce it by sanctions. This was signally so in the ancient Jewish economy. It is no less so in the Christian, which is emphatically styled the kingdom of God. Our remarks apply especially to this, — and they are two, — that it has an external and an internal dominion.

1. There is an external form of administration, — the church, — a visible body of disciples; professing Christ their head; following his guidance; upholding his word and institutions; seeking to perpetuate and spread them in this world. This external order and discipline, with its ministers, its temples, its worship, its teaching, its brotherhood, has held its honored and powerful place among the social institutions of the eighteen last centuries. Sometimes changing its forms; sometimes battling with its corruptions; always contending with internal dissensions; until, at the present day, with less pomp and circumstance, with less aid from the powers of the present world, but with greater unity and efficacy of action, it has enlarged its plans, makes itself felt throughout all the interests of humanity, and vigorously spreads itself out, to the very limits of the inhabited earth.

2. But, secondly, its whole strength is within. It relies for all that it is, and all that it hopes to effect, on the internal energy of the individual soul. "*The kingdom of God is within you.*" "The kingdom of God is not meat and

drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Its external forms and rites are all for the sake of the inward operation on the spirit; and they have no life-giving power, or saving influence to the world, except so far as they live in the individual soul, and subject passion and reason, character and life, to their sway. It is by the conversion of human beings, one by one, to the faith of Christ; by building up within one soul after another the dominion of moral principle, spiritual truth, and the pure life of heaven, that the kingdom of God fairly comes. So many sincere believers, so many devoted followers, so many holy and philanthropic disciples, united to Christ, like branches to the true vine, and bringing forth his fruit for the refreshment of the world, — these it is that accomplish the promises of the Redeemer's empire. In vain have monarchs and armies, legislators and tribunals, attempted to sustain and honor it. Through them it is that the name of God has been principally blasphemed, and the supremacy of Christ hindered; for they would erect an earthly throne for him who declared his kingdom not of this world. Cathedrals, and altars, and hierarchies; learning, and eloquence, and zeal, are but splendid failures, while they seek alone to bring about this great result; for they substitute the splendors of outward form and mechanical operations in the place of interior sanctification. The true work begins in the private recesses of the individual heart — the heart, that throws itself, with contrite, believing, unreserved submission, upon the truth and invitations of Christ; that devotes the whole man to God, and so lives for holiness. Thus, individually brought to faith and the life of the spirit, these men form the company of the redeemed. Through the power of their holy life the church lives. The influence of truth, as from a central lamp, shines forth around them,

enlightening, guiding, cheering all on whom it falls. So others, also, are led to glorify their Father in heaven; and thus, by and by, all may be influenced, and the kingdom entirely established.

Thus there are, 1, the public institutions of the church, constituting the outward kingdom of God; and, 2, the Christian character and life, constituting the inward kingdom. Each is necessary to the other, and each a part of the great whole. Neither, without the other, can cause the kingdom universally to come. But, when the spiritual life burns with fervor and activity in individual souls, and by such souls the external institutions are upheld, then the full coming of the kingdom is hastened, and the final purposes of Heaven speed to their accomplishment.

II. We speak, secondly, *of the progress of this kingdom.* Has that been such as to warrant the hope that the promise shall be finally fulfilled? Remember how it found the world, and to what it has brought it. It found it — the most civilized as well as the most barbarous portions — abandoned to idolatry, and greedily devoted to the vices of blood and lust which always accompany idolatry. Even the most refined natures were by their advancement only the more ingeniously addicted to practices so monstrous that they cannot be named. A few teachers, with their friends, existed, here and there, in a character of comparative purity; but the overwhelming majority were ignorant and vicious to such a degree, that no language describes the world, as a world, more justly than the phrase, "dead in trespasses and sins." Into this world Christ came, set up his kingdom, sent out his servants. The world could not sustain the holy onset. Idols fell; vices retreated; virtues took their place. It was the rolling down of a stone from the mountains, breaking in pieces the iron, and the brass, and the

silver and the gold — the image of worldliness and sin. And now, far as the civilized world is from being what it should be, yet it is redeemed from the state in which Christianity found it, and comparatively pure. The outward kingdom of Christ is established in all the civilized nations. The public law recognizes and reveres it. Public opinion and private character defer to it. The tone of modern civilization is determined by it. In a word, it has wrought the most signal revolution in human sentiments, character, and condition, of which the history of man bears record. Yet every one sees that its whole capacity has not been put forth; that its progress has been checked and thwarted by a multitude of causes, within and without; by internal dissensions, by false philosophy, by barbarous customs, by a worldly and political spirit, mingling with religious zeal; — and yet, notwithstanding, it has thus far prevailed; and now, when these hinderances are disappearing, when the experiments of the ages, and the vast improvements of society, have taught the truer methods of religious culture, and taught the effectual lesson, that only by moral and spiritual means is the cause of man to be promoted; now, we may not doubt its yet more rapid progress, and its final, universal triumph. It shall surely finish the work it has begun, of overthrowing all false religions, and establishing in all nations the power of the Christian faith, and the practice of Christian civilization.

Undoubtedly there still are hinderances. The earthward tendencies of a mechanical age; the attention given to political plans for the benefit of society; the discoveries and improvements in science and art which make the world so much desired as a habitation, and tend to absorb and satisfy with present prosperity, — these are all impediments to be met and resisted. So, too, the skeptical tenden-

cies of an age in which freedom of thought is encouraged, and the temper of indifference which creeps over and puts to sleep the minds of the many, who are engrossed by, and contented with, what the world bestows, and do not care whether God proposes or can give any thing more desirable, — these are obstacles in the path, which sometimes discourage, and baffle, and make us almost fear that the cause of truth and immortality is declining. But then we call to mind that it has again and again triumphed over more powerful obstacles, yea obstacles that lay in its way when its friends were apparently asleep, and there appeared to be hardly a watchman awake to sound the alarm, or even to observe how the ship was carried perilously over the dark waters, while both the winds and the current were urging her to her ruin. And even then she was not wrecked: the spirit of God was still moving on the face of the waters, and the threatening hour was but the prelude to a more prosperous day. But now, observe, amid all the dangers of the era, there is no remissness, no sleeping on the part of the church. All is vigilance and activity. There is life and vigor in every department. There is therefore no cause to fear. In the darkest days truth has been victor; for what could earth, or fortune, or hell do against it, when God was for it? And now, when not only the universal Protector, but all the spirit which his truth has breathed into human hearts, and the united energy and wisdom of believing Christendom, are rallying to the work, it is not possible there should be failure — it is not possible that there should be a pause. It cannot but go forward. All the brightest signs of the times are for it. Heaven and earth may pass away, but this word cannot pass away.

III. We see, thirdly, what the *end* is to be — the universal diffusion of religious truth, and the subjection of man

throughout the globe to its power. Christianity is to spread till the world is Christian. Being Christian, it will be civilized; for the spirit and precepts of Christ will be acknowledged as the law of individuals and of society. Then men will be brethren; fraud and oppression will come to an end; wars cease, and peace be perpetual. This is the *end* that is promised, to which all purposes of the divine administration point; to effect which the doctrines and precepts of Christ have a direct tendency. Let the gospel only spread, and the result follows of course. All prophecy foretells it. The Savior clearly acted in expectation of it. The leaven of his word was to leaven the whole lump; the mustard-seed to become a great tree; he was to subdue all things under his feet; and to him every knee was to bow, and every tongue to confess him Lord.

There are indications that it shall be so. The religion is fitted for a universal religion. The better it is understood, the more clearly does this appear. Then, it has exhibited, and does exhibit, a peculiar power of life and extension. Mahometanism for a season spread, through the force of its enthusiastic leaders; but that force was limited, and the religion came to a stand. It has grown decrepit. It shows no power of revival and increase. Christianity has always been actively expanding, struggling to enlarge its limits; and, within thirty years, instead of becoming decrepit and stationary with age, instead of sitting down exhausted by its toils, it has exhibited a vigor and disposition to expand beyond all former example. It cannot be repressed. It sends out on every side, to the remotest and most savage lands, and into all the dark and forsaken corners of Christendom, that it may establish in all the kingdom of God. See what Christendom is doing by its various costly enterprises for education; for missions in the city and in the wilderness; for missions to the continent and the islands;

for books, and Bibles, and teachers; for philanthropy, for peace, for liberty; and believe, if you can, that the faithful devotedness of the believing heart, which thus grows with its growth and strengthens with its strength, can die away with the great end unachieved. No, heaven and earth may pass away, but *his* word shall not pass away.

There are not wanting those, who, reading the scriptural annunciations of this great consummation, have thought to interpret beforehand the whole of the mystical language in which they are couched; and from the emblems of Daniel and the Apocalypse draw out a minute description of what shall be in the latter days, and even the very details of the process by which the reign of Christ shall be established, and the very date at which the Jews shall be restored to their land, and the Gentiles throng to the church. But, doubtless, this is being wise above what is written. Prophecy can be interpreted only by the event. Concerning all the future, the Christian must say, as the master said concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, — "Of that day and hour, knoweth no man." And again, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." And accordingly, as might be expected, those who have been thus eager to unroll the map of the future, and announce the oracles of fate, have proved themselves defeated and baffled by the infinite disagreement of their interpretations; and whether the day of the French revolution was thought to be the arrival of the catastrophe of all things, or whether the beginning of the end was dated in the year 1834, 1848, or 1866, — it is equally clear that the annunciation is but an unfounded conjecture, and that the duty of man is humbly and trustfully to wait; for the *end* is not yet. But, thank God, the *beginning* is; we have seen it. We may not hope to describe beforehand the events that shall usher in and attend the great day of the

Lord; but we may discern that it is on its march. The signs of the times proclaim it; and it must come at last — that spread of true religion, that better knowledge of God, and holier love of man, and prevalence of righteousness and peace, by which the reign of Heaven is to be marked, and all the kingdoms of the earth to be blest.

There are those, also, who imagine that, before the coming of that great and glorious era, the miraculous powers of the first ages must be reintrusted to the servants of Christ, — since otherwise they do not perceive how the earth is to be converted to his faith. But there is certainly no promise that it shall be so; and the expectation seems to rest on an undue distrust of the efficacy of moral means. The church was introduced and established by the authority of supernatural works; but, being introduced, it has been left, as is the method of divine Providence, to the care of human hands. They have hitherto, though feeble and faulty, yet proved not unequal to the trust; and now, in this age of the world, Providence, which always coöperates with the moral government of heaven, has reënforced them with agents of peculiar power, and multiplied facilities for the work, such as the increase of science, the invention of printing, and the multiplication of copies of the Bible, and a freer intercourse, by a universal commerce, amongst all men. Without going the length to which a distinguished divine has ventured, and declaring that these are agents more than an equivalent for the want of miraculous powers; that they even give to modern missionaries an advantage over the apostles in the work of evangelizing the nations, — we yet cannot deny the efficacy of their action; we easily believe that their tendency is, to spread knowledge and truth, till the empire of sin and ignorance is destroyed — a tendency which does not need a supernatural display to insure its

end, but which goes to that great end by its own inherent and divinely-appointed force. The stone is loosed by divine power from the mountain, and then rolls down and onward by its own force and the laws of Providence, overthrowing all obstacles and filling the whole earth.

We have thus traced the plan of the divine government upon earth from the beginning to the close. We have seen the character and progress of that series of means which Heaven has ordained for the education of the human race; whose *end* is to be seen in the universal establishment of righteousness, peace, and love, among men. Three remarks demand our attention by way of conclusion.

1. If these things be so, we perceive in what light we should habitually regard the history and condition of our race, as *illustrations of the purpose of God*, and helping to unfold the end of his dispensations. There is a connection of all with the grand final issue; and we interpret them truly, only when we read them in the light of religion, and by the aid of great moral principles.

2. If we be in the midst of this great moral scheme of Heaven, which runs through the history of our race, to be brought to a close in the dominion of universal religion and peace, then it becomes us to feel, and to show, an interest in so magnificent a progress, and to quit ourselves as men in its cause. No interests of state or empire are to be compared to it, and all are secondary to it. The advancement of that kingdom of God, which is to rule all kingdoms, is more worthy of attention and zeal, than any and all other projects which command the service of man; the rather, because it is coincident with, and tends to further, all other projects of real good. If, then, we are devoted to the cause of truth, and hope to serve and forward the interests of man by the influence of science and letters; if, anxious for

human welfare, we plead for education, for liberty, for right, for enterprise, for government, — let us remember that they are all valuable, and all promoted, just in proportion as they help to hasten the universal reign of religion and peace, — which is the kingdom of God; — and therefore, the rather, let us heartily spend and be spent directly in the cause of that kingdom, which comprises all human good, temporal as well as eternal. Religion is sometimes spoken of as only one among many influences by which the perfect state of human existence is to be brought about. Christianity is patronized, because it promotes the well-being of society. In one sense justly. If human, present well-being is the great end, Christianity is an essential means. But it is yet more just to say, that Christianity itself is the spirit of all, the strength of all; which alone can guaranty their success; without which all others must fail, and by whose activity all others are made alive. Hence a great duty, especially on men of education and influence. Let our young men see to it that they frame their plans of life accordingly, — always, in all of them, having reference to Christ and the church. Whatever of knowledge, talent, opportunity, influence, they may possess, and would devote to the good of man, let them hear, addressed to themselves, the words which say, "The Lord hath need of them," and forthwith bring them to him, assured that in no other way can they so effectually help the chief interests of man.

3. And there are two distinct methods by which we are to attempt this; just as we have seen there is an external and an internal administration of the kingdom of God. We must sustain, by all means, that external administration, uphold the order of the church, the public institutions of religion, and whatever wise methods are adopted for carrying forward its important purposes. No Christian may

withhold his share of the labor and sacrifice which this demands. But yet more must we build up the kingdom within us. There is its legitimate province, there its only sufficient, its only saving power. It must rule within. It must govern heart, and soul, and life. Then, being its subjects, we can, with good conscience and the hearty approbation of Heaven, toil for its extension; knowing that the kingdom, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, is more forwarded by the access to it of *one* thoroughly devoted and sanctified spirit, than by all the endowments of talent, and eloquence, and knowledge, and all crusades of zeal, unsanctified by personal piety.

SERMON VII.

THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT. — OBEDIENCE.

ECCLESIASTES XII. 13.

LET US HEAR THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER. FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS; FOR THIS IS THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

I SELECT these words as a simple expression of the thought with which I would close the series of discourses I have been delivering on the divine Being and government. If there exists that Being of infinite perfections, he is to be feared and served, and all his commandments ought to be obeyed. *This is the conclusion of the whole matter.* I propose, therefore, to speak of the foundations and nature of that obedience which man owes to the Sovereign of the universe.

I. Its foundations are discerned in all that we have said and seen of the divine existence and government. It would involve an absurdity to say that there is an Infinite Mind, the source and fulness of all minds, from which all else proceeds, and on which all else depends, and by conformity to which alone all else can attain its true end, — and yet that all are not subject to that Infinite Mind. In the nature of things, that which is derived and dependent must submit to that from which it is derived; and if it be a conscious, thinking being, it must voluntarily and intentionally submit.

The image used by the prophet and the apostle appeals to the common judgment of mankind — "Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, Wherefore hast thou made me thus?" And, moreover, since the law of this divine Ruler is the eternal law of rectitude; the immutable rule of equity and justice; coincident with the law of all moral being; written on our hearts; stamped on our nature, — it is therefore impossible to disobey him without an essential wrong-doing to truth, and to ourselves; and disobedience becomes an absurdity and a folly, as well as a crime.

II. It would only be spending words without an object to multiply them on this point. The questions respecting the *nature* of this duty are more practical, and demand fuller attention. For while the duty itself is allowed, it is yet, through the imperfection of man, and the temptations of life, inadequately understood or applied; so that even good men are satisfied with a life of very partial conformity with the divine will, because they have not deliberately considered how comprehensive and strict its requisitions are. For this cause the standard of human virtue is low. It can be raised to the true, the divine standard, only by a more thorough understanding of what the divine will is — by ascertaining and realizing "what is that good, and holy, and acceptable will of God."

Let us, then, start with the recollection that the divine will can possibly contemplate nothing but the perfectly right — that nothing which, in any measure, in thought, intention, or act, is impure, unholy, unjust, uncharitable, can be allowed by the divine commandment. If it can be said of any thing, that it is in the slightest degree wrong, then it must be opposed to the will of God, and in disobedience to his command. So strictly is this so, that it is written, "The heavens are not clean in his sight, and he chargeth

his angels with folly. He cannot look upon sin." From this consideration, it is evident that *true obedience* must comprise the four following characteristics: — 1. *It is from principle;* 2. *Voluntary;* 3. *Universal;* 4. *Absolute.* — Under these four heads I would describe and apply it.

1. True obedience is *from principle.* In this point the obedience of a moral and intellectual being differs from that of the inanimate creation. The stars in their courses, and the dust in the whirlwind, obey the law of God, but unintentionally and mechanically. Angels and men may do it of their own motion, and of free choice; and that mechanical compliance in them which comes from mere circumstance or necessity — because they cannot help, or because they are used to it, not because they wish and intend to obey — is not that which is suited to their nature, and demanded by their relations. Hence there is a great deal of right action in the world, which, however men rely on it, is yet in no sufficient sense obedience. It is conformed to the divine will, but not intentionally so — conformed, just as the plant or the crystal; because, under the circumstances, the life naturally takes that course; — but there is in it no more virtue than in that of the plant or the crystal; each is a mechanical, not an intelligent and praiseworthy obedience.

Obedience, then, must be from an inward principle. This is essential to the existence of virtue in a moral agent. For in virtue we always include the idea of praiseworthiness; which idea is excluded, if you call that virtue which is mere conformity to a rule, and the property of a brute or a stone, as well as a soul. Language is sometimes so used indiscriminately. We hear of the obedience of the planets to their laws, and their being bound by duty to their orbits; and to the vivid personification of poetry, which uses any bold figure for the sake of life, such expressions may be allowed.

But we must not suffer them to confuse our notions of things, or to lead us to believe that the same obedience which is lauded in the unconscious creatures of the universe, will be sufficient for us. For which reason, we are likely to deceive ourselves and mislead others, when we speak of the religious character of modes of feeling and action which are simply spontaneous and innocent; as, for example, the state of infancy or the elevation of genius. It is confounding the most wholesome and necessary distinctions. They are in a state accordant with the will of God; but they do not know it; they do not design it; it is altogether involuntary; and they can be said to be religious, only in the same sense in which a bird or an animal is said to be religious — by a bold figure of speech.

For similar reasons, many of the external proprieties of life, in which good men rest themselves, — the honesty, order, truth of their every-day life, — fall short of making any proper part of obedience to God; because it is, *in their intention*, only obedience to the circumstances and customs amidst which they live, and to their own self-interest. They intend only this, and this only is to be allowed them. If their motives were thoroughly analyzed, there would be found at the bottom no higher purpose than this; and therefore they deserve the credit of no higher. They do so to be seen of men. They have their reward — they are seen of men. They can claim no approbation from God — they have not sought his approbation.

Agreeable to this is the great truth which runs as a connecting thread through the whole scriptural history of God's government, and which is so especially insisted on in the New Testament — *that man is saved by faith.* From the time when "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," until the day when the sacred

books were closed, this is represented as the principle of the divine administration — man is saved by faith; why not by works? He was alienated from God by wicked works; why not restored by good works? He became the enemy of God by breaking his commandments; why not become his friend by conforming to his commandments? Because mere works — outward conformity to the law — is not true obedience. True obedience springs from principle. Without that principle, works alone are comparatively nothing And, therefore, the chief thing, the one essential thing, must be to implant that principle from which holy living and true obedience alone can proceed, and which existing, they will inevitably proceed. This principle is *faith.* He that lives by faith is in possession of that principle which makes him prefer and choose holiness; and holiness being thus a matter of preference and choice, the end and direction of his desires, affections, purposes, he is saved; he is reconciled and brought near to God; is in the true and best condition for all duty, all improvement, and all true happiness: *he is saved.*

2. True obedience must be voluntary. Compulsory obedience is hardly to be termed obedience. He that is driven to an act against his will can hardly be said, with propriety, as a moral being, to perform that act. His hand does it; but his hand is only his instrument. He himself consents not to the deed; nay, mentally protests against it whilst he does it. This would answer in the case of the soldier or the slave, whose tyrant lords have no purpose beyond the performance of so much work, or fighting such a battle; but under the rule of a moral governor, with whom the state of the soul is every thing, to whom the outward act is nothing, if it do not express the soul, — under his government, the obedience of a saint, if the heart rebels in sentiment, is

accounted as nothing. The first, the great, the all-comprehending commandment is love; the perfecting of the law is love. Love cannot be compelled; it is free, voluntary — or it is not.

Hence the vanity of religious institutions, creeds, and worship established by human law, and forced upon a people by penal enactments; and hence the equal folly, in private individuals, of the attempt to secure the favor of God by forms or sacrifices of any sort, without yielding the heart — compounding for a wrong state of mind by severity of manners — compounding for a repining and disobedient temper by loud zeal and liberal benefactions.

In a word, true obedience is the free surrender of the will to the will of God. There is a perfect and immutable right. Man must choose and pursue it. But he is too ignorant and short-sighted to know always what it is. He must go to that Being who does know, and who has explained and enacted it in his law. Man's reason is not equal to decide; the divine reason has decided for him. Man, therefore, is to surrender his reason to the authority of God, and his will to the will of God. There is no way by which his limited faculties can arrive at the knowledge of the infallible right but this, the teaching of God. There is no method by which he can reach his own moral perfection, but by giving up his own will and doing the will of God. Therefore the prayer, "Thy will be done." Therefore, if we may say it reverently, the Son of God exhibited that perfection which lifts him immeasurably above all men, because *he came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father which sent him.* In this way only, is man, — in this contracted sphere, exposed to error, liable to be misled in a thousand ways, — in this way only is he to attain to any thing like consistent virtue or consistent holiness.

Ceasing to follow the devices and desires of his own evil heart; caring for no sensual gratification in comparison with the right; following no intimation of interest, or expediency, or duty, but the indications and commands of the divine law, he is no more led astray by the false lights, and shipwrecked on the desolate shores of this perishing world; but becomes one with God; acts in accordance with the purposes of his grace, which must be accomplished, and so, by his own consent and desire, is wafted onward, by the great current of the divine purposes, to the final haven of perfect peace.

3. True obedience must be absolute — without reservation; without thinking it necessary to justify to one's self the reasonableness of the command; without waiting to understand the purpose and know what shall be the issue, and why this course is ordered rather than another. True obedience is absolute — without hesitation, doubting, or murmuring. It is founded on faith; not on knowledge, nor on reason — faith in the infinite knowledge and unerring reason of the Father — faith, like that which the child, by a strong and beautiful instinct, reposes on its parent — faith, which is just as confident that whatever God orders is right and well, as if it saw clearly all the parts of the incomprehensible plan. This is true obedience. Any other has the seed of rebellion in it. For it says, "I will submit as soon as I can make out the reasonableness of the command, and see that it is for my advantage to keep it. I will conform as soon as I have examined the arguments on each side, and have satisfied my own understanding that the law is a good law." There is a great deal of this sort of obedience in the world. But it mistakes the relations and faculties of man, and offers insult to the great Sovereign, at the moment it professes allegiance, by this unworthy expression of distrust

The children of God must have faith in their Father, and do and suffer what he appoints, because he appoints it, with absolute and unqualified, unquestioning trust.

This is a familiar doctrine with us, and perpetually applied in cases of passive obedience, where resignation is the duty demanded. Submission, in the most absolute terms, is inculcated always, and any one would shudder at the idea of allowing any thing less. We turn away with horror, as from one blaspheming or mad, when we hear some unfortunate wretch repine at the appointments of Providence, and refuse to acquiesce in the stroke of God's hand. But in matters of active duty, we allow ourselves greater liberty: we qualify the letter of the command by our notions of expediency; we conceal or change the truth a little, because it is not prudent, or civil, or customary, to announce it nakedly; we break the command, to do as we would be done by, in our commercial transactions, because we do not see how, otherwise, we can stand on even footing with our competitors; we live in self-indulgence, and neglect of all charitable efforts, and cherish hostile, covetous, envious, and revengeful feelings, because — we do not give a reason, but there is only one reason that could be given — because we choose to gratify the low propensities and corrupt passions of our own hearts, and to follow our own will. All this is as truly disobedience to the divine command as would be direct rebellion against the appointments of God, or resisting the stroke of death. He only, exercises a right-minded obedience, who speaks truth, does as he would be done by, exercises charity, and forgives his enemy, with the same absolute and unhesitating readiness with which he yields to the law that he should take food when he is hungry, and repose when he is weary. The commandments are to him on a level in point of authority. They are obeyed by him with

equal exactness. To see one do otherwise, ought to strike us with the same feeling of abhorrence that comes over us when a rebellious mourner blasphemes God in the solemn chamber of death.

4. True obedience is universal. There is no exception. It does not include some classes of duties, and slight others. It does not follow the commandments at seasons when it may be convenient and desirable, and when inconvenient neglect them. It does not give heed to matters of magnitude, and pass by those of lesser moment. But alike in small and great, at all seasons, and at any sacrifice, the command which appertains to the moment and the occasion is to be obeyed. There can be no exemption. Right is to be done, and that only — not by and by, but now; not in cases of life and death; not when a reputation or a fortune is concerned — but always, in all cases. There can be no such thing as an exception. It is impossible that allowance can be granted for the minutest wrong. Yet here, too, men *take* the allowance, and, so far from making the divine law their rule in all particulars, think themselves bound to apply it only in cases of moment and emergency. How many who call themselves christians, in a state of society like ours, would esteem it rude, over-righteous, fanatical, to bring the consideration of the strictness of the law of God into the ordinary routine of daily life, and limit by it their conformity to the customs of the world. On the contrary, their whole plan of living, and modes of intercourse and of spending time, are regulated by the customs of society alone — habits of indulgence, modes of expense, and whatever goes to make up the routine of existence, expressly regulated by the standard of the community in which they live. Is this right? Is it agreeable to the will of God? are questions which, it is thought, have little or nothing to do with their business; and he would be

esteemed very needlessly scrupulous who should hesitate to live like his neighbors, because, on comparing carefully their life with that which God requires of man, he found it to be not exactly in accordance with the divine pleasure. And yet why should he not hesitate? Why should he not refuse so to live? It is because the standard of virtue in society is so low; that there is so little of lofty, disinterested, eminent goodness. And there can be no return to the pure and noble living of the saints, till we remember, and feel, and act upon the conviction, that obedience is to be universal, and that the commonest arrangement of daily life and intercourse is to be as strictly subjected to the divine law, as the most public and important transactions, even, of the church. No reason, except a worldly one, can be assigned for obedience in the latter case, which does not equally apply in the former.

We see, then, what are the characteristics of true obedience. It is founded in principle. It is the voluntary subjection of the will. It is absolute, without reservation. It is universal, without exception.

This is the obedience which God demands, and which man ought to render. And now, having considered its foundations and nature, let us seriously ask, *Is there any good reason why we should not pay it?* We have contemplated his adorable nature; we have studied his righteous and beneficent government; we know that we are his, by creation, by providence, by redemption — his — altogether dependent and at his disposal. Is there, then, any reason why we should not yield him that hearty, unreserved obedience which is his due? All the reasons are on the other side. From the most disinterested to the most selfish considerations, all urge us to give ourselves to the will of God. Every thing good in us and to us depends upon it. Nothing is to be lost by it; every thing is to be gained.

Does any one ask, "What is the will of God?" that he may obey it? The answer is a simple one — "*Every thing right.*" Make it your study to do what is right, and to resist what is wrong, steadfastly, always, and you cannot err: you will see the will of God daily more and more, and grow in it. This is an infallible rule. But there is something further. Study the divine will in the book of revelation; in the words of Christ and his apostles; in the character of the Savior. These two rules will instruct you fully; follow conscience in always doing right, and follow the Scriptures wherever they lead you. Is there any good reason why these two rules should not be observed? None, certainly, to him who is desirous of being an obedient child of God — none to any rational and moral creature.

If it be said, "Ah, this perfect obedience to this strict and high standard of duty — it is impossible; we despair of reaching it!" then let it be answered — all that we have seen and known of the divine government teaches us of God's paternal allowance for unavoidable human imperfection; that "he knoweth our frame, and remembereth we are dust;" that "he is not strict to mark our transgressions against us;" that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;" that "he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." Therefore it is that Christ came — herein is the grace of the gospel — that the conscientious and sincere may be accepted, if he strive, though he fall short. The erring and sinful is forgiven, if he truly repent and turn unto the Lord, though he have been negligent and perverse before. Blessed be God, there is nothing inexorable, nothing inflexible in his rule. No stern, unrelenting vengeance, but equity and love preside in the government of the universe; and this perfect standard of unmixed right has been

set forth, not to drive us to despair, but, in connection with a Father's forbearance, to incite and animate us to zeal, and self-sacrifice, and persevering diligence, in the pursuit of goodness. Let us feel that it is so; and so feeling, is there any good reason why we should not aim to discharge the great duty of obedience?

We cannot fail to be aware that the standard of virtue in society is loose and accommodating, and that we are continually in danger of being lulled into a life of spiritual indifference and mediocrity, which our conscience cannot approve. We have never yet, — I speak to the consciences of those who have experienced aspirations after high virtue, — we have never yet realized our intentions, or reached the attainment we had hoped. How deeply does this conviction sting us at times, as we survey our condition and prospects! Shall it be so forever? Shall we be content to go on in this uncertain and vacillating course? Shall we suffer it always to be the case, that we are dissatisfied with ourselves, whenever we examine ourselves? There is no way to have it otherwise, but to *receive a new conception of the nature of Christian obedience.* It is not what we have carelessly regarded it. It is not what we have indolently thought it to be. It is absolute, universal, voluntary. Let us surrender our wills. Let us give our hearts. Let us have no will but that of God. Let us *love* his law. Let us delight ourselves in his statutes. Let us meditate thereon, day and night.

This it is which keeps us in such a state of sad deficiency — our inclinations and purposes are not at one with the will of our God. This it is that makes us restless and dissatisfied — we obey him not heartily. Let us yield to him in all conduct and duty, just as implicitly and readily as we yield to the arrangement of day and night, summer and

winter; not dreaming of questioning or opposing his plain directions and laws: then all will be peace; there will be no opposition, no warfare between ourselves and God. Policy, interest, human opinion, appetite, passion, worldly custom, which have been to us so many masters, claiming our service, and dragging us to and fro with contrary commands, will no longer have dominion over us. We shall have but one master, and that the kindest and best; one law, and that the highest; one service, and that a perfect freedom. The serenity of our Redeemer, who did not his own will, will pass into our souls, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God.

SERMON VIII.

THE DUTY OF IMPROVEMENT. — A NEW YEAR'S SERMON.

PHILIPPIANS III. 13, 14.

I COUNT NOT MYSELF TO HAVE APPREHENDED; BUT THIS ONE THING I DO: FORGETTING THE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND, AND REACHING FORTH UNTO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEFORE, I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE OF THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS MY LORD.

"THE things which are *behind*, and the things which are *before!*" For so it is with us here. We are in the midst of things; not at rest, but passing onward; not at home, but travellers; not stationary inhabitants, but pilgrims and strangers on earth. We are going on from stage to stage, leaving on the road one scene of business and pleasure after another, and arriving at new. What was ours is ours no longer. What is ours will be soon gone from us. Behind us are our childhood, our youth, and our early homes, our first warm loves, our first bright hopes, our early innocence and our early sins; before us are the cares and trials of an unknown destiny, and the duties of an uncertain probation — bereavement, toil, sickness, age, death, judgment; — behind us, ignorance, weakness, imperfection; before us, knowledge, virtue, perfection, or, it may be, worse ignorance, baser sin, and the loss of glory; — behind us, a few brief years; before us, eternity.

And, as we pass onward in this unceasing progress, Time numbers our steps, and marks the advancement we have made. As he rapidly strides on, he holds out to us his glass, that we may note the running sands. To-day, as he turns it for another year, he bids us pause to look at the things that are behind and the things that are before, and to recollect ourselves before we go farther. It is well for us, a thoughtless and giddy race, that such moments arrive; that the sun runs a circle round the earth; and when he turns back from the extreme limit of his course, gives warning, by the shortening days, of the shortening term of life — a warning that seems to reach us in the words of our text, *Forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to those which are before.*

Forget? How forget? Why forget? We cannot, we ought not, forget the home of our childhood, the cares of our parents, the faithfulness of friends, the kindness of God, the instructions, the warnings, and the blessings of the past. Every thing whose memory may make us better, we are bound to cherish. The apostle simply means that we should forget our *attainments*, forget that they are any thing; for, compared to what remains to be accomplished by us, they are nothing. Count them, therefore, as nothing. Rest not satisfied with what you have done, but press forward to that which you still have to do.

This is the caution which we are to gather from the language of our text, and which it is peculiarly proper that we should consider and apply at a season like this. It is one of the points in our course by which we reckon, as a traveller by the milestone. It is one of the marks by which we "number our days," and by which we are reminded to "apply our hearts unto wisdom." We look back to the year which is closing behind us, and are ashamed at the scanty record of our Christian progress which it is sealing

up for judgment. We look forward, and we cannot tell that the space of another year will be granted us, to complete the work that is given us to do. What can be more suitable, at such a moment, than to consider the duty, suggested by the text, of continual improvement, and apply it to our consciences? May God give us grace to do it faithfully!

In leading your thoughts upon this subject, I will begin with stating some reasons for the duty.

1. And first of all, we may make the general remark, that Improvement is the universal law of God; to which every thing in nature, and all the arrangements of providence and grace, are conformed. Look where we will, we find nothing made perfect at once; scarcely any thing is stationary; all things are in a state of progress. This may be in a thousand ways illustrated, and in every illustration man may read a lesson of instruction for himself. The herb, the tree, the animal, spring from an insignificant beginning, and reach their perfect stature by a gradual progress. The day does not open on the eye in meridian splendor. The year does not burst into ripe maturity at once. The nation does not arrive at power and fame in a day. — To look more widely for instances. The earth on which we tread, with its tribes of plants and animals of every order, ascending in a beautiful scale to perfect man, has come to its present condition by a process of improvement. Our researches into its structure appear to prove, that, before it was brought out of the chaos mentioned by Moses, it had been already more than once inhabited and destroyed. The remains of its former tenants are found embedded in the ancient rocks. But amongst them are no remains of *men*. The world, at its several antecedent periods, seems to have been peopled successively by creatures more and more perfect, and man, the most perfect,

has existed upon it only since its last formation. And we cannot tell that the series of changes is yet completed. It may be, that after the destruction of the earth by fire, as predicted in the New Testament, it shall be remodelled for the abode of a yet higher order of beings. In the history of God's dispensations toward our race, we have another illustration of our remark. They have gone forward in an improving order. The antediluvian led the way to the patriarchal; the patriarchal was but an introduction to the Mosaic; and the Mosaic was a preparation for the Christian, "a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." And the Christian dispensation itself is one of improvement and progress. Its doctrines and principles, indeed, were fully revealed at the beginning, and recorded in the Scriptures; but there were certain adaptations and applications of those principles which could not then be made, which could be apprehended and carried into effect only by degrees, as human nature should be improved and human society advance, and which, being thus more and more disclosed, as circumstances arise from time to time adapted to them, give to the religion itself a character of improvement. For example, enmity to war and slavery was always essentially a part of the religion; but it lay, as it were, folded up and undeveloped like a plant in its seed, waiting for the season to call it into light and action. Ages passed before it was rightly understood and practised on; and, as its authority on these points has come to be felt, it has seemed like the creation, or certainly like the manifestation, of a new principle. It has been well remarked, that this capacity of Christianity to adapt itself to the growing exigencies and expanding relations of society, is one signal mark of its divine original.

Improvement, then, is a law of the universe. All things alike, great and small, are made to be in progress. Individ-

ual man must not be an exception. He must not suffer every thing else to move on, and he himself be stationary. When the insensible earth and the irrational animals obey the commandment, let not us, who alone are capable of voluntary obedience, let not us alone be unfaithful. When even the all-wise Creator, in unfolding his ways and purposes to his children, observes this rule of constant progression, let not us, with wisdom only of yesterday, children in understanding, let not us fancy that we may rest where we are, and refuse to move forward.

2. Our very capacity of progress is itself a further reason for striving after perpetual improvement. The plants and animals around us have limits set to their advancement which they can never pass. They go forward by a prescribed course to their maturity, and there they necessarily stop. The voice which spake to the sea, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther," has spoken to all things terrestrial excepting man. From that mandate his spirit is exempted. The tree has its growth, and the bird its instinct, and they can add to themselves nothing beyond it. Man, reasoning, immortal, immaterial man, to whom the inspiration of the Almighty has given understanding, has received the power of expansion. His soul may grow — not like his body, which is to perish in seventy years, and therefore becomes perfect in twenty; but, as it is never to perish, it never reaches a perfection beyond which it may not pass. If its duration were bounded by a thousand years, or a hundred thousand centuries, then we might anticipate the day when its growth should be completed. But since it shall exist through eternity, since it can never approach the termination of its being, neither can it approach the termination of its progress. It must enlarge, extend itself, and advance. Who can conjecture the time when an intelligent mind shall be unable to re-

ceive another idea, or a spiritual soul to add to the holiness it has acquired? Who can fancy a rational being living forever, and at any time ceasing to acquire new knowledge from an inexhaustible universe; or coming to a pause in understanding and virtue, while there yet remains an infinite distance to be passed between itself and the Infinite One of heaven? Other things may stop, and become stationary; for they are to come to an end. But not man, for he is to know no end. Others may be satisfied with a perfection which earth can understand and contain; for they are of the earth, and shall return to its bosom. But man, — man, — the son of the Most High, his spirit a ray from the fountain of unquenchable light, made capable of attainments which the gross fancies of earthly beings cannot image to themselves, let him not dream that any present attainment is his perfection; let him press forward to that mark — that something immense and infinite — which Jesus has set before him as the prize of his high calling. For him to be stationary, — it were rebellion against his nature, a wilful forfeiting of his birthright, and should subject him to the harsh reproaches of his own mind, and to the deserved scorn of all higher and lower beings.

This great progress of the human soul is but begun upon earth. But it *is* begun. The desire of purity, the love of excellence, the habits of holiness, the relish for spiritual pleasures, are begun below; and he who has made the greatest advances in these during his mortal life, is doubtless best fitted for entering on a future state. This thought suggests to us another reason for improvement.

3. The degree of happiness and glory to which the soul shall be admitted at death, must depend on the progress which it has made on earth. In our Father's house are many mansions; differing unquestionably in order of excel-

lence. And how are they to be assigned? What saith the Scripture? "According to their works." "He that has been faithful in little, shall be placed over few cities; he that has been faithful in much, shall be placed over many cities." Happiness and honor shall be rendered to every man according to his preparation for them and his capacity to receive them. And his capacity to receive will be just in proportion to the state of advancement at which he has arrived on leaving the present scene. As one star differeth from another star in glory, so shall it be, says the apostle, in the resurrection of the dead. As it is unavoidable that one soul shall differ from another in fitness for happiness, so it must differ also in its reception. The soul that leaves the body in a state of the highest religious preparation, cannot enter at once into all the raptures of the seraph that "adores and burns," and has been glowing for ages in the abodes of purity and love. And the soul that issues from its mortal tabernacle a trembling, anxious penitent, — just assured that its sins are forgiven, but without any confirmed religious experience, or spiritual maturity of character, — cannot enter at once into the fulness of bliss which awaits the faithful servant of God, who has toiled for duty during a long life, and become almost spiritualized before laying aside the body. No; and therefore let us study to be found, at our death, far advanced in holiness, that so we may join the company of those who stand nearest to the throne; that we may be ushered into the light of the highest heaven. And when we reflect that that day may come before another year has revolved, and that, if it do, it must find us still so gross, so sensual, so earthly, — can we fail to perceive that strenuous, daily, hourly effort after improvement is a first and imperious duty? Can we content ourselves to go on thus thoughtlessly and sluggishly, and be

summoned by the final messenger while so far from the mark, and so unworthy of the prize?

4. And consider, in the fourth place, that, if one do not thus improve, he is certain to grow worse. If he go not forward, he will go backward. It may be difficult to make this solemn truth evident to those who have not learned it from observation. But to those who have, it is an affecting and appalling truth. He who is not gaining ground in a virtuous character and Christian preparation, is losing ground. He may not perceive it. So subtle and sly are the beginnings of decay, and so difficult is it for a man to know himself, that he may be wholly unaware of his declension. The victim of consumption nourishes the enemy of his life long within his bosom, and is past rescue from its power, before he perceives his danger. And so it is in the decline of the soul's health. He neglects the means to keep it vigorous and improving; he ceases to nourish it with the word of life, and strengthen it by holy exercise; and, before he is aware, it has become feeble, inert, living in appearance, but decaying at the heart. He fancies himself stationary, and is content. Others see that he is declining. And perhaps he has gone down to the borders of spiritual death, before he is aware that a desperate disease has been preying on his vital powers. God, in his mercy, deliver us from so dreadful a delusion! Let him send to us trials that we can see, and foes that shall openly contend against us; — in the armor of the gospel, in the open field, we may not fear their attack. Let him send upon us the arrow that flieth by night, or the pestilence that wasteth by noonday, and bring down our fortunes and our lives by the arm of the quick destroyer; — this, too, in the strength of our faith, we could bear. But O, save us from the hidden pestilence of the soul! from the darkness that shall hide us from ourselves! Any thing, any

thing but the horrible self-deceit of trusting that we are righteous and safe, when we are walking the paths of death. And yet such may easily be our lot, except we watch and strive, anxiously and perpetually, for improvement.

5. For consider, once more, what it is to be prepared and safe; what it is to have done the work assigned us on earth. This is not a light work; not a superficial and transitory labor, which a few days may perform, or which may be the incidental occupation of some leisure season. It is an extensive, complicated engagement, — not for a day, but for life, for every day of life; with which every occupation of life is concerned, and which the doings of every hour serve either to promote or to thwart. And what is this business, this object for which God has placed man here?

It is, in few words, to form his character for eternity. And what is this character to be? Holy, disinterested, and pure; devout toward God, benevolent toward men, self-governed, and free from sin — a character of which earth has yet seen but one perfect model. After all the study, and prayers, and effort, after excellence of so many good men for centuries, the world has seen but one perfect exemplification of this character; and that in the person of Jesus Christ — the meek and lowly, the holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sin. Him we are to imitate. His character is to become ours.

And is this to be done in a day? or in a year? or in many years? Is it some easy thing, to be accomplished by feeble exertion, at any hour, that we may be thus unconcerned about it, and so little anxious to advance in it? Fashion to yourself what manner of man you should be, if you had the spirit of Jesus, if you had made it your great and chief concern to imitate his excellences. Do you find yourself near to it now? so near, that you may pause, and cease to

go farther? Alas! it is at a far and mortifying distance, that we follow his glorious steps; scarcely do we seem to reflect a ray from his bright excellence. Yet *that* is our pattern. There is our business in this world. If we have done something toward it, the better reason that we should do more. We may not fully reach it — the better reason that we should not pause in the pursuit. There are hinderances, also, in the path; in the affairs of our calling, in the cares of business, in the pleasures and companions of our pilgrimage: the greater, then, the reason for effort and toil, that these may not defeat the great purpose of our being. There are hinderances from our own desires, propensities, and passions; from our weakness, irresolution, and faint-heartedness. It is not an easy task to subdue them; and when seemingly subdued, they may rise again in unsuspected strength, and drag us back. Where, then, is the moment for pausing? At what hour may the child of God, having such a work to do, and such obstacles to hinder him, say to himself, "It is enough; I will cease from my labor"? At what age may man, with his eye on his Master, and his hope on heaven, lay down the staff of his pilgrimage, and say, "I have attained; I have reached the stature of my Lord, and my soul may rest from toil"?

Not while we have it recorded that the prince of the apostles, the inspired, the indefatigable Paul, felt himself at a distance from perfection, and feared to stop in his attainments. Not while man's life is likened, in the gospel, to a race; for he that pauses must lose it. Not while it is called in Scripture a warfare; for he that lays down his arms, or sleeps upon his post, before the warfare is accomplished, suffers for infidelity and treason. Not while sin is in the world, and temptation abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. No; the pilgrimage of duty and toil must go on, while the heart throbs and the pulse beats — without inter-

mission, without fainting, steadily, resolutely. Through the desert, it may be; but God is there, giving water from the rock, and meat from heaven; and who, then, will faint at the prospect? In perils and straits, it may be; but God is in the midst with the cloudy pillar of his providence and grace; and who, then, will shrink from the way? Amongst enemies, in fearful and banded array, it may be; but who will tremble at their power, that is protected by the shield of faith, and armed by the sword of the Spirit, and led toward the promised land by the Captain of his salvation? Let the believing pilgrim then go on; without halting, without looking back, without distrust; onward, onward, — till the way-worn feet stand on the borders of the Jordan, and the bright inheritance is seen at hand. Then, as it is written, "the feet of them that bear the ark shall stand still;" then the children of God may rest from their watchings and toils; and having passed the dark river, in whose swelling waters the grace of God shall bear them up, they shall go, every one, to the place prepared for him from the foundation of the world.

Thus are we instructed, from every quarter, that perpetual progress is essential to our safety, acceptance, and glory; that our path must be "as the rising light, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day" — a solemn, an exciting, an admonitory truth! God utters it in our ears from all the voices of his works. Scripture proclaims it to our souls in all its doctrines, commandments, and promises. A voice from the unseen world declares it to all who aspire after future glory. Our understandings and consciences within speak assent to the declaration. And on the winds of the dying year, which are now sighing around us with their departing breath, the truth is sent home to our hearts in accents of fearful solemnity; warning us that we look

back, before the light of another year shall open upon us, and see what improvement has been made of this.

Let us come to the inquiry honestly. I fear we cannot do it without trembling solicitude. For how little reason have we to think that IMPROVEMENT has been our one great object! Time rolls on, and the world changes as it goes. But how many, as regards *character*, appear to be standing precisely where they stood a year ago, or even many years ago! Just as good as they were then, and no better; no more devout, charitable, patient, or forgiving; no less worldly, selfish, irritable, and slothful. Change has passed over them, trial has summoned them to thought, Providence has warned them by a various discipline of gladness and of grief; but there they stand, unaffected and unimproved. They have basked in the light, they have been refreshed with the dews of benignant and perpetual grace; but there is visible no spiritual growth, there have ripened no fruits of holiness.

Brethren, I profess to you, that when I look round upon the thoughtlessness of men in this matter, my heart sinks with sorrow and amazement. I am astonished and ashamed at the multitude of accountable beings, who appear satisfied with their present attainments, and have long ceased to press forward. I see them all placed in that career from which there is no turning back; every day hurrying them nearer to its goal; every day reminding them of its end; surrounded by means, admonitions, and incitements; great and precious promises, great and terrible threatenings, enforced by the word and providence of God, by the life and love, by the sufferings and blood, of a holy Savior. One would imagine that the urgency of such motives and truths would stimulate to an ardor in improvement which could never slacken nor pause. Yet I see them arriving at a

certain measure of excellence, and content to go no farther. As men, they have been growing old; as Christians, they are still young. Years have added to their fortunes and their families, their cares and their trials; but not, alas! to their charity, hope, or faith.

Do I state this too strongly? Do I use any words of exaggeration? Is it not a sober and a dreadful fact, that multitudes, multitudes of those whose main business should be IMPROVEMENT, come to a full stand early in life, and make no further serious effort at advancement? Is not the evidence of this melancholy fact before your eyes?

Let me address myself to religious men, who have felt the worth of their souls, and have designed to walk in that path of duty which shall lead to life. You have made a certain progress in the great work of your preparation for heaven — the acquiring a Christian character. What have you done respecting it the past year? What additional advances have you made? Are you better acquainted with your religion? Is your life more under the control of its laws? Are your dispositions more subjected to its spirit? Do you feel and exhibit a more disinterested regard to the welfare of others, and have you become more habitually alive to the presence and authority of God? These questions every religious man ought to be able to answer in the affirmative. If he cannot, what has he been doing? If no better man, no better Christian, than five years or one year ago, to what purpose, and in what way, has that time been spent? Why has it been prolonged? And how guiltily misused!

Happy, thrice happy, is he who can look calmly on this solemn hour, and, while time pauses on his way, can survey his character and history without a blush or sigh! Happy that religious man, who knows that he is more holy since

the year began, and can hear without trembling the wings of the messenger as they sweep by him, bearing up to God the unchanging register of the finished season! He may hope to meet serenely the last hour of life. He may have peace when his eyes shall close on the last sun of his earthly existence. But if, careless and unprofitable Christian, your conscience reproaches you for the misspent time and wasted opportunities of this one year, — if you look with shame and agitation at the empty record which it now gives in to judgment, — O, how will you bear the arrival of that day, when all the books shall be opened, and time shall be no more! Awake! Arouse yourself! Let it be enough that one barren year has passed! Rouse yourself to diligence and duty! It may be that the fruitless tree will be spared one year longer. Awake! Be sober and watch unto prayer. Redeem the time that has been lost. Forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto those which are before.

But there are others, to whom this impressive hour addresses itself; those who are *not* religious men; who as yet have not commenced the great work of life — the acquisition of a Christian character. What shall I ask of them? Whether they have been improving? Alas! they have not entered on their course. Existence, so far as regards any *intentional* preparation on their part, is a blank. They make no pretence to have proposed to themselves a Christian life. They have yet to take the first step.

Miserable, miserable men! who have a work to be performed, a life to be accounted for, a soul to be saved, and as yet have done nothing concerning it! who see time flying, death approaching, and yet have not so much as commenced their great business in the world! Miserable beings! Have you forgotten that God's image is stamped

upon your souls? that the Son of God has died for you? that you are not your own? and that your hours are fast bearing you to his presence, who shall judge the world in righteousness? And for what is it that you are willing to risk going unprepared to his awful bar? What is it that occupies your life, and is an equivalent for the hazard of eternity? Your business? Your pleasures? Your pursuit of wealth? Is it these, that take the place with you of the God who made, and the Savior who redeemed you, and the happiness that is everlasting? Is it these, that you are giving in exchange for your soul? Miserable men! madly choosing time instead of eternity, earth instead of heaven, when, by a wise obedience to the gospel, you might insure all! satisfied with the life which now is, when you might also have that which is to come! — content with what you know will perish, when there lies within your reach what shall endure forever!

Listen, I beseech you, to the admonitions of this solemn night. Lay not your heads upon your pillows, give no slumber to your eyelids, till you have devoted one hour to thought. I charge you, as in the presence of God, who sees and will judge you, in the name of Jesus Christ, who beseeches you to come to him and live; by all your hopes of happiness and life, I charge you, let not this year die, and leave you impenitent. Do not dare to utter defiance on its decaying hours. But, in the stillness of its awful midnight, prostrate yourselves penitently before your Maker, and let the morrow's sun rise upon you, thoughtful and serious men, beginning a new life with the new year. And when this season shall again find you, — as God grant it may! — in the house of prayer, may it be as humble, rejoicing, improving Christians.

Brethren and friends, may it find us *all* such! Alas!

vain wish! For we cannot believe that it shall find us all among the living. The destroyer is abroad; wherever we go, he is lurking in our path, and we know not when he may strike us to the dust. We leave this house, and perchance shall never return within its sacred walls. We mingle in the concourse of the world, and come up again to this holy altar when the year has revolved; but there are some amongst us for whom our eyes shall then look in vain. I saw the young, the healthful, the happy, worshiping here at our last celebration of the season; but they are not here now. They then heard the cry of the prophet, "*Prepare to meet thy God!*" * and they went away, and have been called to meet him in judgment. From the warning of that night, they were summoned to his presence. And from the warning of this, it is equally certain that some of us shall be summoned. O that none may be taken unprepared! O that God would be pleased to spare the inconsiderate a little longer, that they may prepare themselves before they are summoned to depart! But for those who are ready, let them go. If God call them in their ripeness, why should we wish to detain them? We may see them and enjoy them no more on earth; but they will not be lost to us. In that world where years revolve not, and sin is unknown, and death never comes, there will be their home. There, if we will be faithful, we shall meet them again.

* This was the text of Mr. Ware's sermon on the last evening of the previous year.

SERMON IX.

THE MORAL PRINCIPLE OF THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT.

1 CORINTHIANS VIII. 13.

WHEREFORE, IF MEAT CAUSE MY BROTHER TO OFFEND, I WILL EAT NO FLESH WHILE THE WORLD STANDETH, LEST I CAUSE MY BROTHER TO OFFEND.

THERE is something admirable in the disinterestedness of spirit which dictated this declaration. It is the entire abandonment of selfish considerations for the sake of others' good. It, in this respect, exemplifies the meaning of our Lord's precept, *Love thy neighbor as thyself.* It is the application of the principle elsewhere expressed by Paul in various forms — *Let no man seek his own, but every man another's good. In honor preferring one another. No man liveth to himself.*

The question alluded to in the text was one of peculiar interest at that time, when the new converts to Christianity had but just left their old religions, and were still connected with relatives, friends, and neighbors, who remained attached to idolatrous worship. Mingling with them in the intercourse of common life, it would not be easy to avoid contact with matters of religious form, and involving questions of religious obligation. For example, if a friend invited them

to an entertainment, and set before them meat which had been offered in sacrifice to an idol, — what should they do? Might they, as Christians, innocently partake of it? It was plainly a question of great practical interest. The Corinthians asked advice of the apostle respecting it. Paul, in reply, lays down the principle, that an act is to be judged of by its effect, not on themselves alone, but on others also. If they partake of the meat with the clear understanding that there is no such thing in existence as a false god, then they may do it innocently; it is no act of idolatry; it is no dereliction of their Christian principle. But all are not sufficiently enlightened to be able to do this. From custom or some other cause, they still have a regard to the idol, and eat it "as a thing offered to an idol." In so doing they sin. Such persons, therefore, must refrain. Here, then, are two classes — the enlightened and strong, who can eat without sin; the unenlightened and weak, who cannot eat without sin. But ought there to be two practices in the church, — some of the brethren frequenting the idolatrous festival, and some avoiding it? This would hardly do; because it would plainly be exposing the weaker brethren to an unnecessary temptation. They could not well understand why others should be permitted this indulgence, and themselves be forbidden; and thus, imboldened by their example, they would take the indulgence and commit sin. Accordingly, the apostle advises that, in all brotherly love and Christian consistency, the strong should deny themselves this gratification for the sake of the weak. His expression is very clear — "For, if any man see thee, who hast knowledge, sit at meat in the idol's temple, will not the conscience of him that is weak be imboldened to eat what is offered to the idol; and so, through thy knowledge, thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? When ye thus sin against

the brethren and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat cause my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I cause my brother to offend."

The occasions for displaying the same generous disregard of selfish considerations, for the benefit of others, frequently occur; and the instances of such disinterestedness are not so rare in the Christian world as to be matters of wonder. But perhaps never, until the present age, has this principle been made the motto of a great action of philanthropy; never before did thousands unite together for the moral benefit of their fellow-men by means of an express abridgment of their own liberty of indulgence. And, after all that has been pointed out as distinguishing this remarkable period, perhaps nothing is more worthy of being regarded as its distinction, in a moral point of view, than this; that multitudes have abandoned — not for a time, but for life — a customary, innocent, moderate gratification, — which did them personally no harm, and apparently threatened them no harm, — on the single ground that others abused it to harm, — that "this liberty of theirs was a stumbling-block to the weak." In this way, an attempt has been made to begin the removal of that great mass of crime and wretchedness which I spoke of in the morning; the removal of which once seemed so hopeless, that the boldest enthusiast hardly dared to dream of it; which had so intrenched itself in the passions of men, in their habits, in their laws, in their interests, that it laughed defiance on all opposition. Against that evil this principle of disinterestedness has been brought to bear, and the evil has begun to give way — an illustrious exemplification of the strength there is in Christian affection, and the appeal to the nobler impulses of human nature!

The words of the text express the principle on which this

action has proceeded, and are at once its authority and justification. The unhappy class of sinners by intemperate excess had become alarmingly large. It seemed as if there were no hope of retrieving the lost, or of checking the progress of others to the same ruin. But it would not do to let the plague rage without an effort to stay it. First, therefore, was tried the power of a moral engagement; the exposed were persuaded to pledge themselves to entire abstinence from the use of ardent spirits. This proved an effective method, and a visible change for the better began to take place. But it soon became evident that the friends of the cause were now divided into two classes — precisely like the two already referred to among the Corinthians; one consisting of the strong, who could partake moderately and remain temperate; the other of the weak, who could not touch without excess. The former were left at liberty. Why not? They would not abuse their liberty. The latter gave up their liberty; they deprived themselves of the right to use at all what they were so prone to abuse. But this came to be felt as an unreasonable and galling distinction; the liberty of the one was a stumbling-block to the other; and until it should be removed, it was plain no further progress could be made. What, then, should be done? Precisely what the apostle recommended to the Corinthians. This division between the strong and weak should cease; the strong should surrender their position of superiority; all should come under the same obligation; and forthwith the magnanimous pledge was taken — If our moderate use of ardent spirit cause our brethren to offend, we will taste no more while the world stands, lest we cause our brethren to offend.

Under this disinterested action the reform went prosperously on for a time. But it was by and by apparent, that

there still remained an inconsistency in practice, and that a stumbling-block still lay in the way of many. "You counsel us," was the language, "wholly to abandon this indulgence, — which we were early taught to regard as almost necessary, — and you fortify your counsel by abandoning it yourselves. But to most of you that is evidently a very unmeaning act. You in reality give up nothing; you retain all that you care for, — wine and other choice liquors. *We*, too, would give up our inferior drinks, if we could afford to supply ourselves with yours; but, as it is, we think your giving a pledge is little better than mockery; and we are not to be cajoled by any such inconsistent pretences."

Such was the language. It was thought by some to be unreasonable, idle, impertinent; they would not listen to it, and went on as before, wondering at the want of self-denial in the poor, but refusing to aid them by example; astonished that they would thus wilfully stand in their own light, and insist on ruining themselves, because of the inconsistency of their neighbors.

Others, however, felt the inconsistency that was pointed out. To be sure, they said, the complaint, in its whole extent, is rather extravagant and unreasonable; and it shows great weakness in men to insist on injuring themselves for such a cause; but, then, it is our business, as Christians, to be considerate toward the weak, and do what we can to strengthen them. Now, it is evident that nothing can be done for them so long as this state of things lasts; but something must be done for them; this stumbling-block must be removed. And so, — leaving all selfish considerations, taking counsel only of the Christian obligation to others, — they forthwith made application once more of the principle of the apostle, and pledged themselves to abide by it — If our partaking of wine cause our brethren to offend, we will

drink no more wine while the world stands, lest we cause our brethren to offend.

It is not a small portion of the community that have entered into this apostolic agreement. It is not a small effect that has been produced by it. Objections have been made to it, — some practical, some theoretical; many by the worldly and self-indulgent, some by the self-denying and devout. But, allowing the utmost that should be allowed to such objections, it still remains to be considered, that it is not possible, in this fallible condition of humanity, to devise any large action for the general good, against which, in some of its features, there will not lie plausible, and even real, ground of objection. The most unexceptionable and beneficent movements — from which humanity and religion have gained most — have had their attendant evils. We are not, then, to be deterred from this work, because imperfections can be pointed out; but, observing how much has been already accomplished, and what is yet going on, we think the enterprise should be pressed forward without faltering, — its doubtful tendencies watched and restrained, to be sure, but with no relaxation of its eagerness or strength, — not doubting that while man does his duty, and society is thereby filled with blessings, it will be safe to leave to the mercy and remedy of divine Providence the unavoidable imperfections of human agency that accompany it.

If we ever could have doubted the rectitude and expediency of the course which has been pursued, we could doubt no longer, when we saw it followed, — after twenty years of anxious experiment, — followed and crowned by a result which had not been anticipated, and which we cannot look at without a strong feeling that we behold the prospering hand of God. For a quarter of a century, various and persevering measures had been pursued, until the com-

munity was penetrated throughout with information and excitement on the subject. And now, at last, — as if the harvest of that long seed-time and laborious husbandry, — there has arisen one of the most astonishing movements of which history gives account; so remarkable in its origin, so rapid in its extension, so triumphant in its success, that I say again, we cannot refuse to acknowledge in it the special intervention of Providence, if Providence ever acts in the affairs of men. Think of the revolution which has taken place in Ireland, which promises to convert that lost people into a temperate nation. What could have been deemed more improbable than that? And yet, behold, a greater wonder is here! An unprecedented effort at self-reform has burst forth from the very bosoms of the wretched victims of this evil, — the abandoned, the despaired of, the forsaken, — for whom men had no hope, and fancied that God had no mercy; — those lost wretches themselves, from the depths of their own desperate debasement, have called up their manliness, and stood forth, emancipated, disenthralled, — the preachers of that temperance they had so long despised. It was like a resurrection from the grave. It was as if the tomb had spoken. No wonder that attention was arrested. No wonder that the voice of hope echoed over the land, and a thrill of admiration and gratitude passed from city to city, and from border to border. And now, within less than twelve short months, — not a few only, — not a few hundreds, — but thousands and thousands of helpless creatures have been redeemed; from outcasts have become blessings, from burdens are helpers, from the shame have come to be the joy of heart-broken friends. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes! It is going on; and, say what we may — what need not be denied — of some doubtful procedures, of some unwise speeches, of some inju-

dicious measures, of some men apparently rescued who have sunk back, — still there remains ample room to believe that the reform will go on so far as greatly to relieve the next generation from the curse that burdened the past.

In the midst of this movement, my friends, we are living; we witness its agitation on every side. What are we to do? At a time when a momentous moral reform is going on about us, which involves the happiness of multitudes, and an immense gain to the public prosperity and character, — are we to sit still, and let it all pass by? or are we in some way to be concerned in it?

It would be difficult to show cause why *we* should feel less interested in it than other portions of society. We have a common stake with other citizens in the prosperity and virtue of the community. We have a common interest with other human beings in the honor and happiness of humanity. We, no less than they, are linked in with those who have been and may be ruined, and who may yet be saved or lost. For the present, it is true, we are sitting apart from them, in the retreat of these quiet shades; yet we are bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, and in a very few months the youngest of you will be in the midst of them, striving hand to hand with them in all the cares of life; priding yourselves, perhaps, on the superiority of your education, and your greater consequent capacity for action and influence. Surely, then, there can be no good reason why you should have less interest in these important measures than your brethren abroad.

For consider what those measures are. They are, briefly, the absolute prohibition of all intoxicating drink; the tempted are to bind themselves to it by a solemn pledge; and all others, as far as possible, are to join them by entering into the same obligation, whether personally tempt-

ed and in danger, or not. By these means it is hoped to bring on the time, when the use of these dangerous luxuries, having been by all men expressly abjured, shall become unknown, and future generations be without peril from them, because without temptation.

The plan is a perfect one. If it can be carried through, a change will be produced in the state of society, the worth of which, whether calculated in happiness, or in virtue, or in gold, cannot be estimated. Some men smile at such expressions as extravagant. But I never knew one to do so who was tolerably acquainted with the subject.

And what is to hinder the plan from being fully carried into effect? But one thing — the refusal of the people to join in bringing it about. To do it perfectly requires a universal agreement. Just so far as men refuse to join the agreement, just so far they hinder the blessing. Now, undoubtedly, many will refuse; and therefore the absolute extinction of the evil is not to be expected. For one cause or another, satisfactory to themselves, they stand by, and stir not a finger in aid of the work; sometimes assigning conscientious and religious reasons, — sometimes silent in contempt or indifference, — sometimes seeking to check and thwart the movement by cold sneers, by small wit, and by intimidating example. They are able to succeed so far as to prevent the extinction of the deplorable evil. We must make up our minds to it. We must say with our Savior, "It must needs be that offences come;" and we must add with him, "Alas for that man through whom the offence cometh!"

But let others do as they may, is there any good reason why *you* should not countenance and abet a cause like this? The same reasons which decide other persons in the community should affect you. If your brothers and companions

in other walks of life have good reason to be concerned, your being differently situated does not destroy the force of the reason. If they can manifest that concern, without interference with their stated duties, you can do the same. If the young men of the republic, elsewhere, are making it a part of their patriotism, there can be no good reason why the young men of a higher education should regard it with apathy. Indeed, why must it not be a reproach to them, if found holding back? if, while the young men, who enter the service of society from the work-bench, the plough, and the counting-room, carry into affairs a habit of rigid self-denial, those from our colleges are distinguished for adhering to the self-indulgence which others have abandoned? If the country is to be a gainer by this extraordinary movement; if the fountains of wretchedness and crime are to be in a manner dried up; if happiness, virtue, and prosperity are to be indefinitely increased; if the good and wise are not altogether lunatic in their congratulations, and the community and the church stark mad in their expressions of gratitude to these recent benefactors, — then, surely, it is becoming that the educated classes should not be found recreant; — it must not be that they, — entitled to a place among the leaders, — who always have been, and always must be, treated with a certain deference as lights of the social order, — it must not be that they forfeit what belongs to them, by backwardness to aid the improvement on which the community prides itself.

But there are other considerations. Painful as it may be to say it, it is yet true, as we are all aware, that there are peculiar exposures in the life you are leading here. Separated from home, absent from the society of the domestic circle and the occupations which there satisfy the mind and heart, young men are thrown together here in a situation

somewhat unnatural. They must compensate among one another for the want of what they have left behind. They must contrive such substitutes as they can for the companions and enjoyments which nature provides; and, in doing this, — amid the chances of accidental companionship, in the thoughtlessness of inexperience, in the overflow of social gayety, in the excitement of numbers, festivity, and song, what wonder that some are beguiled! — that the unwary are entrapped, and the pure overwhelmed! It is not necessary to seek any statistical comparison with young men in other walks of life; without such comparison the roll of names is melancholy enough. One's heart aches, who can look back a quarter of a century, at calling up the images of promising boys and gifted men, whose beauty and promise have been blighted by this terrible curse. Shall I tell you how many of my classmates and contemporaries learned here to brave the wine cup, and have perished by intemperance? — one of them under circumstances so appalling, after so protected a childhood, that one would think it lawful, not only to bind the inexperienced by a pledge, but in fetters of iron, rather than expose him to the slightest hazard of so fearful a catastrophe. If that case could be brought before you, in all its sad and loathsome details, and you could be assured that there was now sitting among you *one* who was destined to pass through the same abandonment to the same end, — you should not be told who, — you should only know it to be one whom you daily meet and welcome; who has father and mother now sitting at home talking of him, planning for him; and sisters, whose own sweet hands nightly toil to provide for his support and comfort here; and it should be told to you that he, meantime, unwarily beginning here, shall go on step by step to the extremity of that deep damnation; — suppose that all this

were revealed to you; — I believe that you would rise up as one man, and pledge yourselves with an oath to taste only water while life remains, that so he might be delivered. I can fancy that I already see you with glistening eyes offer yourselves to the act.

Would you do this for that one? And do you not know that there are sitting on those seats — if we may judge the future by the past — in all human probability more than one, — more than two, — more than five, — upon whom that sad fate will fall? You could hardly be more certain of it, if an angel told you from heaven. But you can save them. Their fate is in your hands. You have but to rise up, as others around you are doing, and forswear the ruinous indulgence; and you thereby save them, beyond all peradventure, from the threatening ruin.

Will you not do this? Will you not, in the spirit of the apostle, take up his magnanimous resolution, and abide by it steadfastly to the end? MY LIBERTY SHALL NEVER BE A STUMBLING-BLOCK IN A BROTHER'S WAY. IF ANY INDULGENCE OF MINE WOULD LEAD A BROTHER TO OFFEND, I WILL TASTE IT NO MORE WHILE THE WORLD STANDS, LEST I CAUSE A BROTHER TO OFFEND.

SERMON X.

THE PROMISE OF UNIVERSAL PEACE.

ISAIAH II. 4.

THEY SHALL BEAT THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOUGHSHARES AND THEIR SPEARS INTO PRUNING-HOOKS; NATION SHALL NOT LIFT UP SWORD AGAINST NATION, NEITHER SHALL THEY LEARN WAR ANY MORE.

It would not be easy to imagine a declaration which should appear more incredible than this must have done at the age in which it was uttered. To "learn war" was then, as it has always been, the grand employment, the peculiar art and ambition, of monarchs and of kingdoms. To suppose it abolished, to fancy it exchanged for the inglorious pursuits of the vine-dresser and the husbandman, was to suppose what in that age would be accounted an inconceivable degeneracy and humiliation. That the mind of any individual should then so far free itself from this universal prejudice, as to perceive in the abolition of war a subject of glory instead of shame, — that it should so far penetrate into the future, as to understand that a condition of human society might arrive in which it would be possible, — is a striking intimation of wisdom higher than that of man. There was nothing then existing in the state or tendency of the world, to suggest such a change to the most sagacious human foresight. When, therefore, we find "holy men of old," in the confident language of our text,

and in a variety of glowing anticipations scattered through their works, dwelling with delight on this idea of a peaceful futurity, we feel confirmed in our persuasion, that "they spake not of themselves, but as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

How wonderful was the foresight of those venerable seers may be perceived by reflecting, that nearly three thousand years have passed away, and there is yet discernible, by other men, only a tendency toward the result which they predicted. This tendency is growing every day more apparent, as the world advances in knowledge and civilization, and as the Christian religion is better understood. The number of those who perceive it, and feel it their duty to advance it, is every year increasing. By associations, through the press, and from the pulpit, they are endeavoring to quicken the growth of that sentiment, by the universal extension of which the desirable end must be accomplished; and at this season of the year, when the Christian church is celebrating the nativity of the Prince of Peace, it seems a suitable occasion for us to join them in their endeavor, and attempt to second their philanthropic exertions.

I have accordingly selected for present consideration the words of this remarkable prophecy — a prophecy which all who understand the magnitude and extent of the evils of war will ardently desire may be accomplished, while none will doubt its practicability, who will understand by what principles the custom is sustained, and what principles are in operation for its downfall. These are my three points. The evils of war are such as to demand that the efforts of all good and patriotic men be directed against it; while the weakness of the principles which sustain it, and the strength of the principles which oppose it, give encouragement to believe that they shall not labor in vain.

I. The evils of war can only be stated; there is no time to describe them. But the bare definition of war is sufficient for our purpose. It is the arming of one nation against another, for the express purpose of destroying so many lives and creating so much misery, that the one shall be forced to yield some point to the other. In this definition there is no ingredient but what is evil. The purpose is evil — slaughter and misery. The consequences are evil — slaughter and misery. There is no pretence, indeed, of any thing good, except in the ultimate consequences. These, it is pleaded, may be beneficial, notwithstanding the amount of immediate wretchedness. And yet, remarkably enough, it is acknowledged by all who have attentively read the history of the world, that the vast majority of wars have ended, either without result — that is, leaving the parties just where they were in relation to the subject of controversy; or with a result which evidently might have been attained without the conflict; or in the victory of some selfish leader, whose object was, not the public good, but personal aggrandizement. Now, this is an admission, that, speaking in general terms, war is a system of evils, and that the good consequences which may follow in its train are occasional and incidental, not its natural and appropriate results.

Observe more particularly the character of these evils. The first is the waste of human life — by sudden stroke in the field, by slow torture from severe wounds, by fatigue. by famine, by pestilent disease. The sword kills its thousands, and we learn their numbers in the recital of history; but the other causes of loathsome, lingering, inglorious destruction, slay their tens of thousands unreported. No one writes the history of the hospitals, whose crowded tenants languish and die in every form of horrid torment;

or of the road-side, where the wearied and feeble sink down and perish, while the army marches on. Yet, doubtless, the number of those sacrificed to exhaustion and disease equals the hecatombs of the battle-ground. And when we read that two hundred thousand lives were destroyed in the battles of a seven years' conflict, we find it necessary to double the number, in order to arrive at a just estimate of the actual waste of life.

Next, observe the waste of property; — harvests destroyed, ships plundered, villages burned, cities pillaged, whole countries ravaged; so that no one can follow the track of a campaign, and not be made to see, that it is little else than robbery on a great scale. So obviously is this the case, that, boast as we please of the melioration of modern civilized warfare, the armies of Napoleon, and the navies of Britain, and even the petty skirmishers on our own frontiers, had enough of the character of banditti and buccaneers, to have hanged their leaders as robbers and pirates, if they had not been protected by national flags. And God knows whether a national flag ought to be a protection for such outrages!

Again, observe the waste of happiness; of which, however, nothing need be said, after what has just been remarked of those insatiable destroyers of happiness — death and plunder. But though they may seem to fill the cup, we shall better understand the bitterness of its mixture, if we will cast a thought on those who are made to drink it; not only those, who, in the wretched region which is the seat of the war, are made beggars, whose homes are burned, their houses sacked, their daughters and sisters violated, their husbands and brothers slain or made captive; — we must add to these the multitude of sufferers on the other side, who are too often overlooked because of their remote-

ness from the scene of violence. They know nothing of the presence of the host, they see nothing of the garments rolled in blood; but their sons and lovers never return from the cruel field to comfort the widowed parent and desolate wife, or be the gladness and support of the lonely fireside; or, if they return, return but to afflict — crippled in body, ruined in constitution, helpless in affairs, and, worse than all, depraved and brutalized in character.

For this is the next point in the description — the destruction of morals; — an accompaniment of the hideous occupation of the soldier, so common, so almost universal, so all but inevitable, that it has passed into a proverb. What is the camp, but a community in which the moral code of civil life has been suspended; in which life has become a trifle and a jest; where its sacredness is despised, and the purity of its relations sneered at? What are its virtues, but slavish obedience, and violent and brute courage, and systematic indifference to the rights and feelings of others? what its business, but to injure and revenge? what its recreations, but debauchery and impurity? Is it not so? Read the historians of the interior camp, and learn. The majority of its inhabitants are made up, in most cases, of the debased, the intemperate, the broken in character, the desperate in fortune, for whom the honest occupations of peace have no charm, and many of whom have suffered the penalty of pursuing its dishonest callings. To these are joined, from various motives, young men of high spirit and adventurous romance, of good education and virtuous domestic habits; and, after exposure to such influences, under such circumstances, how many of them will return to their pure homes for any other purpose but to pollute them, and be a grief to those that loved them? In short, who does not know that war is a prime corrupter?

It disbands its hordes, when it has done with them, to be the curse of their own country in peace, as they have been that of the enemy's in battle.

Without going any further, therefore, this simple statement respecting the destruction of life, property, happiness, and virtue, is ample testimony to the evils of war. If we but remember, further, how these evils have been always present among the nations, how it has always been a part of national policy to promote them, how large a portion of the cares and expense of governments have been directed to making provision for this one object, and how large a number of the higher orders in society have been educated to no profession but that of conducting armies, — we shall see an amount of ill, spread over the history of the human race, which is unutterably appalling. And yet, perhaps, if, like Sterne, when he draws the picture of slavery, I could single out from the confused crowd of sufferers some one individual, — for example, that unfortunate and accomplished young officer, who was disabled on the field of Waterloo, and overlooked by those who bore away the wounded, lay alone for several days and nights, unheeded and unrefreshed, his body imbedded in the soft, wet ground, till at length, when discovered, the worms from the earth beneath him had eaten their way into his living flesh, — if I could faithfully draw one such picture as this, it might better enable us to comprehend and realize the horrors of this infatuating barbarism, than any general views of calamity and distress that could be given.

II. But I must leave this point, and proceed to inquire how it happens, when the case is palpably thus, that civilized men can shut their eyes to the abomination, and go on making regular provision for perpetuating its tremendous ills.

To reply to this inquiry fully would demand a long and

detailed investigation. But the true answer, and a satisfactory one, may be given in a few words. War is continued through the power of custom, tradition, prescription, fashion, education, — or whatever that is to be called, which makes man so much the creature of circumstances, and leads him to adopt without inquiry the usages which he finds established in the community. This is a usage consonant to certain propensities of human nature, agreeable to "the lusts which war in the members," and therefore welcome to men of a certain character; while the simple fact that it is a usage of all nations and ages, prevents its real character from being perceived or inquired after. It is from precisely this cause, that many other absurd and iniquitous practices keep their place in the world. For how long a period did the African slave trade pass unquestioned, even by the best men; yet it was only necessary to look at it deliberately, in order to its being driven with execration from the civilized world. So it is with the domestic slave trade of our own country — a trade acquiesced in, with all its cruelties and crimes, only because it is established, and which, if not already existing, could be no more introduced amongst this people than the savage rites of Juggernaut. Precisely so in the case of war. It is a thing established. It is found in the world by every generation that comes forward, and is taken up by it as one of the institutions of society, no less fixed and inevitable than the ordinances of nature.

And then, further, the circumstances and methods of ordinary education are conformed, in their character, to this actual condition of things, and tend, in turn, to strengthen and perpetuate it. The boy's first playthings are the drum and the sword; his first amusement, to march in company with a feather in his cap and an ornamented coat; his first lessons are drawn from books which are full of military

images, and the spirit of heroic adventure; and even his academic leisure is sanctified by the mimicry of martial parade. Thus the very atmosphere of society, through which the child breathes his way into manhood, is tainted with this corrupting ingredient, and every successive generation is made to inherit the prejudices of the preceding.

If further causes be demanded, it is easy to perceive how they arise out of this which has been mentioned. We find them in the circumstance, that in this institution is opened to ambitious men an obvious path to distinction; in the circumstance, that government has constituted the army a distinct profession, and thus made it for the interest of a large class in the community that war should not be abolished; in the fact, that the great law of right has never yet been made the absolute rule for the conduct of political affairs, or the morality of political men; and in the fact, that rulers and people have yet to learn that the principles of rectitude which bind men in their private relations, are equally binding in their public relations. I do but glance at these points. They show what it is that upholds so strange a barbarism in the civilized world. It is custom and education. These are its supporters; powerful, it is true, but not indomitable. The race may be improved by better education, as well as individuals, and its customs may be changed, as well as those of an individual. As a man corrects a bad habit by applying the remedy to each separate action in which the habit consists, so the evil customs of society are to be broken, by appealing to the individual members who compose it, and correcting the faulty opinion or character in them. Thus the improvement which began in the suggestion of a single mind, spreads from man to man, till it becomes the universal judgment of the community. Very dear and inveterate errors have been

by this process overthrown. It was thus that Luther began a great service in religion, and Galileo in science; and, to speak of vulgar practices which once prevailed, the whipping-post and the stocks have disappeared, ignominious and cruel punishments have ceased, the slave trade has been interdicted; and why should not war follow in the train? It can hardly be said to be more deeply rooted than were some of these other obsolete abuses; it, like them, depends for its existence almost exclusively on the circumstance that it is a custom; it derives no more support than they were thought to do from the nature and necessity of the case; and it is, if possible, still more decidedly opposed by reason, policy, and religion. This I was next to show.

III. *Reason* certainly does not sustain the custom. On the contrary, it is not easy to say what would be accounted more unreasonable, if it were now a question whether the custom should be commenced. Suppose that the nations had hitherto adjusted their differences in some other way, and that the proposition were now made that henceforward they should be adjusted by force. It needs no argument to show that the whole world would reject it at once, as descending from a rational mode of arbitration, suited to intelligent beings, and adopting in its stead what could only be adapted to creatures whose sole weapons are horns and teeth. In truth, has not this trial been made? Half a century ago, there was the commencement on this continent of a new combination among states, when they arranged their mutual relations, and agreed to the terms of their mutual intercourse. Was it one of these that their future differences should be decided by appeal to arms? Was this so much as proposed? It might have been a thousand years ago; but in the present age, it would be thought no more absurd to restore the ordeal by fire, or the judicial combat

in private life, than to establish arbitration between the states by arms. Would it not be equally so among the powers of Europe, if now called on for the first time to regulate their international intercourse? No one can doubt it, especially if he remember, how the tendency of increased civilization has already exhibited itself, even while this venerable custom retains so much of its authority and glory, in causing questions of national dispute to be referred to the quiet umpirage of an impartial power, which would formerly have arrayed armies and shaken kingdoms.

But more particularly. Sound reason certainly does not advise or sanction that a rational being should conduct important concerns on principles which put out of view his rational attributes. Yet precisely this is done in the appeal to the sword. War decides great questions, on principles which wholly put out of view man's rational attributes. It sets up the judgment of his physical nature above that of his intellectual. It resolves problems of moral or social right, which pertain to the understanding, by instruments of bodily force. It allows and establishes the supremacy of body over mind, of strength over wisdom; and grants the rightfulness, in principle, that hordes of savages should seize and possess the fairest regions of civilization and refinement. Look at the matter fairly, and you cannot deny that it comes to this result. For although it may be true, that, where two nations are of nearly equal resources and power, the battle may be gained by the superior intellect of one of the commanders, yet it can never be so where there is any considerable physical inequality. In such a case, brute force must prevail. And then is exhibited the mortifying absurdity of beings endowed with reason, and thereby placed at the head of the animal creation, abandoning the guardianship of that sacred faculty,

and submitting themselves, like the inferior races, to the mercy of mere corporeal strength.

Try it, too, by a parallel case, — the controversies of private life. The same barbarous days which originated public war, permitted questions relating to personal wrong to be settled by private war. But it would now be accounted the extreme of absurdity to put such questions on the issue of single combat, since neither sword nor pistol has the power of discerning right and wrong, the just and the unjust. There is, indeed, one private controversy, which civilization has not yet wholly taken from the control of this ancient barbarism, namely, the controversy of Honor, so that, while all the world would laugh at the folly of him who should propose to decide by duel a lawsuit respecting insurance or an accusation of theft, there are some with enough of the dark ages hanging about them to esteem it quite agreeable to reason to settle questions of decorum or reputation in this way. They would be unable to maintain their gravity if the man accused of fraud should seek to prove his innocence by fighting his accuser; but if one have spoken an ill-advised word, or touched the reputation of a friend, it is extremely reasonable to believe that a duel will remedy the wrong. No matter which is slain, the aggressor or the injured, or neither of them; the result is equally certain, — the wrong is repaired, the stain is wiped off. Now, the infinite absurdity, as well as blasphemous impiety, of this sanguinary folly, is so well understood, that even a military emperor could say, "I DESPISE the arguments of those who seek to justify it." The laws of most nations regard it as a high-handed immorality; and very few are found so abandoned as at once to dare the justice of their country and defy the displeasure of God. Yet it is altogether in vain that men have attempted to establish any

difference in principle, between this atrocious solecism of deciding private quarrels by murder, and the established legalized system of manslaughter by which national disputes are settled. They both argue moral questions by weapons of physical force; they both subject right to the dominion of might; they both advocate the placing of human life and human happiness *beneath* considerations of mere property and personal pique; they both pretend to remedy a great evil by indefinitely increasing it; they both esteem it a less crime to bring unmeasured wretchedness on the helpless and unoffending, than to forgive an injury or forego revenge. Can any thing be named which has less the countenance of sober reason?

Policy is equally opposed to this strange madness. True policy is wisdom; and wisdom is sagacious to select the means which best accomplish the desired end. Is this a description of the war policy? What are we to say to the immense expenditure of wealth, the dreadful waste of life, the cruel wreck of happiness, the profligate corruption of morals? Is it to be believed that the great purposes of society, the beneficent ends of government, the liberalizing influences of knowledge, refinement, and art, can be secured in no other way than through this path of blood and sin? What are those purposes, what are those ends, what are those influences, but the security of life, property, character, and happiness? And are they secured by the ruthless and desolating hand of battle? Are they promoted by that policy which is ready to put them in jeopardy upon every national misunderstanding, and sacrifice them without stint or remorse to the passions, or injustice, or ambition of a few individuals? and this, too, where the sacrifice must be, as the whole history of the world testifies, without any prospect of adequate compensation? For truly said one of our own

statesmen, "It is an instrument entirely inefficient toward redressing wrong, and multiplies instead of indemnifying losses." It is therefore to be rejected with scorn from all judicious views of what constitutes the true policy of a nation.

But *Religion* is even more decidedly the enemy of war. That nations beneath the ancient mythologies and the modern barbarous idolatries should advocate and practise war, is not to be accounted strange. Worshipers of bloodthirsty divinities and devotees of an irrational faith, it was to be expected that they should imitate them in a bloody and irrational custom. But who can fail to be amazed at finding Christians, — disciples of a religion whose watchword is LOVE, and whose motto is "Peace on earth and good will toward men," — inconsistently adhering to the practices of a benighted and depraved idolatry?

Nothing is susceptible of an easier demonstration than the opposition of Christianity to the spirit of war. What is Christianity? It is the religion communicated to men by divine revelation, that they might be delivered from iniquity and misery, and introduced to the highest and purest happiness. But certainly this is far from being the object of war. What is the morality of the gospel? It would not be easy to describe it better than in the words of Paul: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Try the spirit or morality of war by this description. Is war a spirit of *love?* Is its temper benevolence, and philanthropy, and disinterested affection? Is it *joy*, — any joy but in that triumph which celebrates the humiliation and wretchedness of thousands? Is it *peace?* Is it *long-suffering*, or *gentleness*, or *meekness?* Not unless these things are consistent with impatient and exasperated ambition, cherished pride, and cool,

deadly, calculating determination, to brook no superiority, and to trample an enemy under foot. Is it *temperance?* Alas! this bare enumeration of the Christian graces is sufficient to silence all pretence of baptizing war with a Christian name. I do not say that no warrior ever was a Christian; but, clearly, no man can be heartily devoted to the trade of the camp, its sincere advocate and faithful practitioner, and be *characterized* by his benevolent, pacific, forbearing, gentle, and meek disposition. He himself would only ridicule the idea, and avow, that if this be a true description of the Christian character, Paley was right in declaring, that "no two things can be more contrary than the *Christian* character and the *heroic*."

Look at the description of this character as given by Christ himself in his Sermon on the Mount. It begins with the peculiar and distinguishing blessings pronounced on the meek, the pure, the humble, the merciful, the peace-makers, and proceeds to inculcate, in the most positive terms, the duties of forbearance and forgiveness, and the sinfulness of retaliation and revenge. Resist not evil; love your enemies; bless those that curse you; forgive if you would be forgiven. These precepts can hardly be incorporated among the principles which prevail in a state of warfare. Put upon them any qualification they can bear, they will not describe the morality of the camp. Nor can our Lord's perpetual lessons of purity and self-denial be made consistent with the allowed and honored practices of military life.

Look at the Christian character as it was exhibited in the person of the holy teacher himself. It needs but a glance at that illustrious image of sweetness, gentleness, tenderness, and purity, to perceive how totally irreconcilable is the true Christian life with the violence and passion, the lust and

blood, which triumph in the indolence of the garrison and the splendors of battle. So the early disciples regarded it; and for two centuries, while their Lord's example was fresh and the church comparatively uncorrupted, no Christians were to be found in the profession of the soldier. They refused to bear arms, even at great personal hazard. They held sacred their master's words — "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight."

Or take the argument in another point of view. What is the *result* to which Christianity tends by its prevalence in the world? Is it not, through the operation of a wide-spreading philanthropy, to promote to the utmost the well-being of men, and to establish amongst them an intercourse of mutual benefits? When we observe what it has already effected for the advancement of society and the removal of human ills, do we not feel confident that its universal prevalence will be the establishment of the highest social order and happiness? But no one will describe in these terms the tendency of a state of war. Its prevalence never could be expected or designed to secure this state of universal brotherhood and social prosperity. The two things are absolutely incompatible. Just so far as the one triumphs, the other is defeated; as has been most truly said, — "If the Christian disposition were universal, the case is clear; the world would be a society of friends. Whereas, if the other disposition were universal, it would produce a scene of universal contention; the world could not hold a generation of such men."

It is, therefore, plain that there exists a positive contradiction of the spirit of war to the spirit of Jesus Christ, and an irreconcilable opposition between the tendency of the one and the purposes of the other. The doctrine which

came from God for the special blessing of the world, bears its decided testimony against this ancient practice of an unregenerate race, and in every step of its progress prepares for the fulfilment of the prophecy of our text. If so, what a rebuke to the Christian world! What an appeal to Christians, to see to it that they henceforth second, and no longer thwart, the beneficent tendency of their faith!

Such are the evils of war, and such the principles which severally support and oppose it. Ought it, then, to stand in the world? The destroyer of happiness, the corrupter of virtue, whose pride is to lay waste the fairest works of God and of man, — upheld in its place of power by no better warrant than that of custom, and education, and the will and interest of ambitious men, — while reason rejects it, and true policy abhors it, and Religion utters against it her most indignant denunciation; — ought it to stand? Let the friends of the human race answer. Let the rising generations, which are coming forth into the action of society to adopt or to change the manners of their fathers, answer. Let the ministers and friends of religion, who believe that God has declared all men to be brethren, and that the true prosperity of this earthly being is to be found in co-operation for the common good, answer. And let every one, in his place, lift his voice and hand, and give one vote toward that universal ballot, by which mankind shall cast from its seat of power this bloody idol of a long infatuated world.

But is there encouragement to attempt any thing?

I say, first, if it be a duty which we are called upon to perform, it is no matter whether there be any visible encouragement or not. Duty can be done, sooner or later. It must be begun, — in the dark, perhaps; but we shall work our way to the light.

But I say, further, there is encouragement — visible, ample encouragement.

The customs of a barbarian antiquity cannot stand before the advancing civilization of mankind. Many have already disappeared, like foul birds of night before the approaching day. Others are fast disappearing. This cannot remain forever. It has already been compelled greatly to modify its laws, and mitigate its severities, and put on airs of humanity and gentleness in accordance with the spirit of the times. And this spirit is itself still advancing. And as the true principles of reason are more universally and practically understood; as they rise from the educated to the privileged ranks, and spread into the political and military departments; as the riper study of political economy makes known the true policy of society, and the better understanding of the rights of man compels the ruling families to recognize and promote the claims of the people; and, yet more, as Christianity goes on infusing its spirit more and more into all the interests and pursuits of man, elevating the whole character of social motives and social virtues, and compelling a universal reverence for principle in public as well as personal concerns; while Education, the handmaid of religion and morals, trains the generations which are coming by a more and more thorough discipline of mind and heart, — a state of things will be brought about, in which it will be impossible for so gross an imposition as that of war to exist; impossible for so hateful an enemy to the true interests of man and the revealed purposes of God to hold its place among the tolerated things of the world.

Already, therefore, the powers are at work which are to accomplish this desirable consummation. Already the process is begun by which God is to fulfil the amazing prediction of the text. The fire is kindled at the forges, where

"the swords are to be beaten into ploughshares and the spears into pruning-hooks." The teachers are already abroad, who shall persuade men to "learn war no more." If we would hasten the day, we have only to throw ourselves into the current of events, and we may row with the tide. There may be, here and there, a counter current; but the main stream is flowing steadily on, and the order of Providence is rolling forward the sure result. The schoolmaster and his companions, when they fill the world with well-informed, well-directed, thinking minds, and the philosopher with his pupils, when they offer to society those discoveries which go to better the condition and elevate the thoughts of their race, — are all working to this end. The philanthropist, in all his spheres of present activity and his various institutions for the relief of human ill, knitting together the bonds of human sympathy, making men feel like brethren, exciting interest in newer, higher, and more grateful objects than those of personal ambition and worldly policy, is doing much to prepare the way. All associations for the cultivation and diffusion of knowledge and truth, all institutions for advancing the doctrine of Christ, and prevailing on men to love and follow his pure and peaceful character, for inculcating the true love of God, and teaching men their nearness to him and the real nature of the happiness which he has provided for them; — all these, — and every Bible Society and Missionary Society, every Sunday School and every philanthropic enterprise, — are agents for the cause of peace; are heralds of the day, and hasteners of the day, when all men shall be brethren, and the law of nations shall be the law of love. War has been the offspring of ill-regulated and ignorant passions and perverted views. Let religion regulate passion, and better objects be presented to the gifted and aspiring, and the

restlessness and contentions of men will cease. They will rejoice in the gladness of that day, when Jesus, the Prince of Peace, shall reign king of nations as he is of saints, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

We see, therefore, with our own eyes, that a way is rapidly opening for the accomplishment of this glorious work. *This is the purpose which is purposed upon the whole earth, and this the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?*

SERMON XI.

THE LAW OF HONOR.

PROVERBS XX. 3.

IT IS AN HONOR FOR A MAN TO CEASE FROM STRIFE.

It is said by a distinguished author, in a work which is one of the manuals of classical education, that "the rules of life by which men are ordinarily governed" are the Law of Honor, the Law of the Land, and the Law of God. It is the object of religious institutions and instruction to uphold the last of these as the supreme and universal rule. In doing this, it is sometimes necessary to bring the other two into a comparison with it, as standards of duty and right. There ought to be no opposition between the law of the land and the commandment of God, and no contradiction to either of them in the sentiment of honor. And it is especially important to show, with respect to the last, which is an ever-present sentiment in a refined community, and fills the atmosphere of social life, that it is, when properly considered, identical with that sense of right which is the divine law; so that the man of true honor is the man of scrupulous virtue.

This is rather to be done, because the principle of honor is more likely, than regard for the law, to become the guide of men of the world. It hardly occurs to them to refer to the statute-book for restraint or direction; while that prompt feeling of regard to the prevalent judgment of the commu-

nity respecting character, which marks the sense of honor, is always present and operative. The anxiety to stand well in the estimation of the world, the fear of singularity, the dread of disgrace, is so strong, that men are often led thereby, in opposition to their judgment and inclinations, to do what others propose, lest by those others they should be held in less esteem.

A principle so powerful and active demands to be occasionally scrutinized. It should be sometimes brought up to the sanctuary, to be rectified and adjusted by a comparison with the perfect standard of human character there held up. Let us attempt this to-day. Let us look at this sentiment of honor; let us discriminate the true from the false, and show their relation to divine and human law.

The word HONOR, in its original idea, signifies *respect*, or *praise*. It is that tribute of good opinion, which attends a character thought to be commendable. It is the external expression of the respect which is conceived to be due. Thus the apostle says, "Honor all men;" show them that respect, which, as partakers of human nature, belongs to them. "Honor the king;" show him that respect, which, as holding such a position in society, is due to him. "Honor is not seemly for a fool;" it is not suitable to pay respect to an individual of this description. Such was the original application of the word, — the expression of that respect which is due to character or station. Now, to deserve and receive such a testimony is one of the strongest desires of man; and hence, by an easy transition, the word came to be applied to the sense of desert or of character in the individual judged, as well as in him that judges; and he is called a *man of honor*, who is alive to this sense of character, and conducts himself consistently with it. Perceiving desert in another, we pay him honor; perceiving it in himself, he claims honor.

Hence, as only real desert should receive the homage of respect, the man of true honor is the man of real desert; the man, who has this sense of character because he is conscious that his integrity of purpose and uprightness of life give him a claim to the honor which is always rendered to such a character; who cannot be guilty of a wrong or an unkind action, because be would thereby in his own eyes, — no matter how it might be in the eyes of others, — in his own eyes, he would forfeit that high claim. He cares less for the judgment which men actually pass upon him, than for that which he knows they ought to pass. His sense of honor is sense of desert, rather than desire of reputation.

Proceeding from this origin, it will appear, that the characteristic ideas comprised in the sentiment of honor, are, *self-respect and respect for others.* When we say, that one is "a man of honor," in preference to calling him "a man of integrity or virtue," it is because our attention is particularly drawn to these traits; he is distinguished for his self-respect and his respect for other men.

Such a character is marked by generosity and manliness. The idea of meanness is especially excluded. It is inconsistent with self-respect. A proper self-respect cannot be mean; it cannot endure the consciousness of concealment; it cannot bear the consciousness of obliquity in purpose, selfishness in motive, or unfairness even in thought; and, while it stands so far on its rights as to expect and claim from others a decorous and respectful demeanor, it is yet more scrupulous to render it to them. Such a man, valuing himself on the dignity of his nature, which others have in common with himself, conducts himself toward them as he desires that others should do toward him, in the spirit of the apostolic injunction, "Honor all men." He thinks himself less disgraced by its omission on their part,

than on his own. He is rather ready to defer to others, agreeably to the other injunction, "In honor preferring one another." He yields, in this spirit of mutual respect, he yields something to his fellows beyond what he thinks it necessary to insist on receiving. It is thus a generous spirit; it always consults the feelings of others; desires their happiness; guards their reputation; shuns wrong toward any one as the first disgrace; strives for right as the chief honor.

Taken in this sense, the sentiment in question is a suitable one for man, and seems to have been designed in his constitution as one of the guardians of his virtue. When thus enlisted on the side of right, it becomes a high instinct, prompting to spontaneous rectitude, and causing an intuitive shrinking from whatever is unworthy and base. It contradicts no law of man, and is in harmony with the law of God.

But at the same time, from its intimate connection with what is personal in interest and feeling, it is greatly exposed to degenerate into a false and misguiding sentiment. And so it has in fact happened. Connecting itself with the notions of character which prevail by chance in the community, rather than with the rule of right and of God, it has erected a false standard of estimate, and kindled a light that leads astray.

The process is something like this. The character of a man of honor is so valuable, that every one would willingly be thought to possess it. No man can bear to be thought destitute of it. Therefore it becomes important that they who have it not should contrive to appear to have it; and hence a multitude of fictitious forms are invented, by means of which it may appear to be attributed to those to whom it cannot be justly ascribed. One would think the resort a pitiful one; but it is found to answer its purpose.

The appearance passes for the reality, the name for the thing, the form for the substance; hereby credit is saved, and society moves on satisfied with the plausible deception. Thus honor comes to bear the same relation to virtue, that politeness does to kindness; it is its representative; it keeps up the form and pretension when the principal is absent; and, for all the ordinary purposes of the superficial social system of the world, it is accounted quite as good as that which it stands for. Where there is no real sympathy or good-will, politeness takes its place, and keeps all smooth by its bland hypocrisy of manners; and where there is no real virtue, honor takes its place, and makes all look fair by its plausible outside of decorum.

This, then, is the first objectionable trait in the world's law of honor, as a rule of life; *it is deceptive and superficial;* it is a thing of appearance only, and not a reality. And from this the descent is natural and easy, down to its next ill quality. Setting the value which it does on appearance, it finds the object of right gained, by *seeming* to be right; then the heinousness of wrong may be avoided by concealing the wrong. The man has learned to act, not with a view to doing right, but with a view to reputation, — sometimes even for the appearance of having the reputation. If he secures this, he has gained his end. This he may secure by hiding from view whatever would put it to hazard; and so he allows himself in any private vices, yet retains his name. His name does not depend on what he is, but on what he seems; he takes care to seem right, and is what he pleases to be. Thus he lives a life of infidelity to his domestic relations; but accounts it no ill, so long as it is not known; nay, though it perchance be known, so long as he is, notwithstanding, treated with respect. He is capable of deceit and falsehood; yet is not any the less self-

complacent in his delicate sense of honor, provided no one CALLS him a liar. Then, indeed, he starts up in proud self-defence; he feels the stain like a wound; the imputation is dishonorable; but the stain itself was not dishonorable so long as it was not remarked upon.

Thus it appears that a man of worldly honor may be guilty of a certain degree of baseness and crime without inconsistency and without compunction, if he have but the skill to keep it from being known. It is not wonderful that it should soon follow from this, that he may be guilty of certain sorts of baseness and crime *openly*, and yet not forfeit his reputation. And such is the fact. One may be a gambler to a certain extent, and actually ruin a friend and drive him to despair, — yet no impeachment of his honor. He may be unprincipled in his expenditures, so that the poor whom he employs shall be unable to obtain of him their just dues; he may revel in luxury, while defrauding the mechanics and tradesmen on whose ingenuity and toil he lives, — yet no impeachment of his honor. He may be a known debauchee, trampling on the most sacred rights and affections of his own home; he may, by a process of deliberate, heartless cunning and fraud, bring down an humble beauty to hopeless disgrace and misery; he may be, on a very trivial offence, the murderer of his friend; — yet not one, nor all of these crimes, accompanied as they are with what is mean and base, takes from him his claim to be treated as a man of honor. He is treated as such. We could name the name of more than one such man, who is allowed to walk abroad in society, to mingle in its high circles, to hold a place among its high officers. Strip off his factitious mantle, and the mind regards him with loathing. Put his mantle on again, and he is a man of honor!

The spirit of worldly honor is thus evidently character-

ized by *selfishness*. Its fundamental idea is a reference to what the world will think of ME; *my* reputation, *my* standing, — how are they affected? What will secure them in the eyes of the world? Every thing must give way to this paramount consideration. I must secure my own good name among those with whom I move, *come what may*. It is amazing what deeds are done in consequence! In the great world, the peace of families is violated, the confidence of those most loved is abused, and the interests one had sworn to support are abandoned. In lesser circles, — in a college, for instance, — the same principle leads a young man headlong to do what the spirit of his companions demands of him, — though he knows, that it is against the judgment of the friends and patrons whom he loves and depends upon, and will go nigh to break the heart of those who gave him birth. These considerations he learns to despise. So intensely selfish is this principle! sacrificing every thing else to its own morbid craving for the good opinion of the circle with which one chances to be connected.

It is equally distinguished for its *jealousy*. Selfishness is always jealous. It cannot have any thing of sincere and generous confidence in others. The man whose rule of life is, to refer every thing to its bearing on his own reputation, to weigh all the words and looks of other men with a view to discover whether they sufficiently acknowledge his claims to consideration, acquires thereby an unreasonable sensitiveness of feeling, nourishes an uneasy spirit of jealous suspicion, is annoyed by slight causes, and offended by trifling inadvertences. Instances of this are familiar in the history of society, and have furnished abundant materials for the derision of the satirist. But ridicule is too light a weapon for what works so much woe. This wretched

temper, uniting with the pernicious principle we are speaking of, impels to action. The passage is direct from jealousy to revenge. In the moral code of honor, revenge is a great virtue. It is the noblest achievement of a man, when offended punctilio is writhing under the wound of a word. Philosophers and moralists speak of revenge as a crime. The laws of God and of man forbid it as such. Civilization, as it has gained sway over man in its beneficent progress, has caused it to decline from use like other practices of a savage life. But, in the code of honor, it still holds its place as a virtue. The law may punish the greater offences; kind feeling, philosophy, and religion may forgive the less. But honor prohibits forgiveness. It demands revenge. The offence may be real only to the diseased sensibility of excited jealousy; but its punishment must be actual and signal. It is decreed in letters of blood. This is the only system of social economy from which the growing refinement of the world has expunged no portion of its sanguinary code.

Thus jealous and revengeful, it is not surprising that the system in question should be *despotic* also. Such tempers are always so. It rules with arbitrary, inexorable, uncompromising sway. It allows no wavering, no relenting, no appeal. The slave is not more entirely deprived of his right over his own limbs and labor, than the devotee of honor is deprived of a right to his own judgment in all things within her province. The Inquisition was not more inexorable to its victims, than is the court of honor to him who stands within its jurisdiction. He may have serious doubts respecting the morality of the course demanded of him; his more generous feelings, his conscience, his sense of responsibility to God, his obligations to those he loves, his dread of crime, — all may plead with him. But he is

compelled to silence their affectionate and monitory appeals, and is led pinioned and blindfold to the end. He bears no ill-will to any one; he is sensible of no wrong, he has designed no wrong, he knows revenge to be a sin, and he starts from bloodshed as a crime. But of what avail these better suggestions of his heart, these virtuous sympathies, this reviving sense of right, this awakened thought of God? He is in the hands of the ministers of honor, and they allow him no retreat. He must go on by that rule which he has adopted. The terrors of disgrace and ruin await him if he draw back. And thus, willing or unwilling, — like a victim to the sacrifice, — he is led out and immolated on the altar at which he had been proud to worship.

This is the consummation to which the system leads. The duel is its tribunal and its place of execution. Worthy close of the progress we have described! It is fit that what began in meanness should issue in blood. It is consistent that the end should be in an act which no sophistry has yet been able to take away from under the definition of murder — an act, which is distinguished from most of the murders punished by the hangman only by a greater share of that deliberate preparation and cool purpose of mind, which go to make up the very definition and aggravate the guilt of that act; distinguished from assassination, mainly, by the circumstance that the assassin does not expose his own life, — as if, by exposing two lives, I diminished the guiltiness of destroying one! — as if, by purposing both murder and suicide, I escaped the sin of either! — a practice, also, which has been denounced by all governments in modern times; which lies under the ban of express law in nearly every nation; and which, after this exposure of its folly and wickedness, is able to offer in its defence no

better a plea than that of custom and a certain traditionary sense of honor — a plea so poor, that the emperor Frederic the Great said, "I DESPISE the arguments of those who seek to justify it." That man of military science, than whom none can be named having better claim to decide such a question, was willing to pass upon the system the stigma of *cowardliness;* thus taking from it its favorite plume of pride. And well he might. For it makes the great restraint on human conduct to be fear. It binds men to observe the forms of mutual respect by an appeal to their fears. It does not say, Avoid to illtreat and defame, because it is wrong; but, because you will put yourself in peril of a challenge; and then it drives its disciple to the field, not by a persuasion that it is right, but by a fear of disgrace. Hence it is not surprising that some of the most punctilious observers of decorum, in certain circles, should be regardless of it in others, and even become insolent toward those from whom they do not fear the chastisement of blood, — sometimes even toward individuals of that sex which is privileged to be exempt from the most distant hint of insult. And, when this is observed, we ask, what better can be expected of a rule which builds, not on principle, but on fear? which assumes to make gentlemen and men of honor through the agency of the same low motive by which the slave is driven to his task?

And this system of selfishness, tyranny, and cowardice presumes to take precedence, among rational men, of the statutes of the commonwealth and the law of God!

It is difficult at any time, — it is especially difficult today, — to speak on this part of the subject as its dreadful solemnity demands. The criminality of that code of morals, whose court of justice is the field of single combat, is so

mingled with folly, that one hardly knows in what character to approach it. But the recent catastrophe has alarmed the country; and every man, who has the opportunity, is called upon to give voice to the sentiments which truth and justice are impatient to utter; to do something to vindicate the insulted community from the wrong which has been done it; and to bring to the test of right and the divine law that system whose bloody fruits we are witnessing — a system, as we have seen, unprincipled in its origin, selfish and jealous in its operation, revengeful and bloody in its end; whose progress is over the violated laws of both God and man, and whose consummation is an act of unmitigated crime. Of such a system, at such a moment, in such a country as this, every man that has a voice should speak out the curse of earth and heaven. In such a country, I say, — for, however it may be elsewhere, its atrocious inconsistency with the institutions and purposes of a free land renders its dominion tenfold insufferable here. What right have we here to a privileged class of law-breakers and criminals? What have we to do with an aristocracy of felons and manslayers? Where is the warrant in our constitution for this new nobility of blood, this peerage of the dirk and the pistol? Yet, to our shame, it exists! If a common man, in a moment of sudden passion, revenges an insult with a blow, or dares his fellow to an immediate fight without weapons, and one falls a victim, the law steps in, the court is arrayed, and the unprotected, penitent, agonized sufferer is executed on the gallows. But, if two men in higher life, taking deliberate and formal counsel of other men, *all of them under oath to guard the welfare of the republic*, go forth at midday to commit the foul offence, and one of them dies upon the spot, the others return in safety to their seats as the guardians of the public weal, and

the highest authorities of the republic * pay honors to the remains of him who died in the act of violating its laws. Yet this purports to be a land of equal rights, where justice is impartially dealt out to the high and low! Who will purge it of this crying inconsistency? Who will wipe away these disgraceful wrongs?

The pulpit, beneath which so many young men sit while forming the characters by which they are to influence their country and their fellow-men during many future years of active and public life, would be false to its momentous trust, if, at such a moment as this, it failed to lift its warning cry; if it did not attempt to disabuse their minds of the delusive fascination with which the reckless spirit of worldly honor is too often invested. The halls of learning, where Philosophy teaches, and Science utters truth, and Christianity communicates the law of brotherhood and love, would be unworthy of their lofty place, if they did not resound with the proclamation, that all those great and deathless interests denounce and abhor the masked impostor, that, under the name of honor, opens to the aspiring young the highway of sin and death. And therefore it is that I have sought to tear away its disguise and expose its deformity; therefore it is that I would bring forward in its place the true honor, founded in right, — exercised in self-respect and respect for all, — faithful to all trusts alike, — fearing only God. Let the future men of our country hear, and make it theirs.

There is much in the aspect of the times to alarm the patriot and make the Christian sad. We have been accustomed to believe that society is advancing, that man is

* Let it never be forgotten, to the honor of the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States, that they refused to join in this gross impropriety.

becoming a more civilized and rational being, that religion has taken the world out from its semi-barbarous era, and secured to it the age of refinement and progress. The order of the age seemed to be onward, only onward, to the removal of social evils. Cruel and savage customs were disappearing, torture and the ordeal were gone, regard for human rights was becoming prevalent, the whole world seemed moving on with gifts of love for the wretched, the captive, and the sinful, and the earth was echoing with the sounds of the triumphant march of humanity.

When, therefore, in such a state of things, the quiet is broken by deeds of violence and strife, the evil is not only felt as a crime against morality and man, but it strikes the disappointed heart as a sin against the character of the times, as a dark omen of defeated hopes. When the peaceful supremacy of the laws is assailed by the irregular passions of the mob, and the sanguinary vengeance of self-constituted tribunals; when the sacred harmony of the halls of legislation is interrupted by vulgar brawls; when the presiding officer of a state assembly descends from his seat of honor to plunge a knife into the bosom of a member; when a company from the supreme council of the nation step forth from their illustrious duties to settle a paltry dispute by the rifle, — we feel, not only that the laws have been defied, and the honor of the republic outraged, and treason committed against the majesty of the state, and a ghastly wound inflicted on the reputation of the country, — but that the dark ages are threatening to return upon us; that the barbarians are within our borders; that there is a conspiracy against the progress of man; and that we are to wait yet longer than we trusted to for the coming of the day, when mind shall triumph over brute force, and truth and right shall assume their full dominion.

But, though saddened, we may not despair. All is not lost. The promises of God cannot fail. Let the friends of man and the country be but true to themselves, — let them raise the alarm to the sleeping people, and summon them to the rescue of their fair inheritance, — and all shall yet be well. We may trust in God, that even the present dreadful calamity may be the instrument of good, by awaking to a sense of the danger those who else might have slept on. We may trust, and not doubt, that he will make the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder will restrain.

Therefore there is reason that we seek to dispossess of its dominion the false principle which has wrought such evil, and to enthrone in its place that true and manly honor, which is in agreement with the law of the land and of God. In that there is nothing barbarous or selfish, nothing jealous or revengeful, nothing inimical to the peace of individuals or the order of society. It is that spirit of self-respect and mutual respect, which is always generous, and always devoted to the right. It rests upon the dignity of man as the creature of God. It makes his law, and not human opinion, the standard and rule; his praise, and not the praise of men, the great object of desire. It holds itself bound to give account of itself to him alone. Therefore it cannot do wrong. It cannot injure or defame. It cannot be driven to violate truth, or conscience, or right. It cherishes peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

In conclusion, one solemn conviction presses on our minds. Men may, if they will, think to select for themselves their principles of action and rules of life. They do it at their peril. They cannot, if they would, remove themselves from the obligation to live by the law of God. We are born beneath his government, and we cannot escape its

jurisdiction. We have the teachings and institutions of the gospel, and by them we shall be judged at the last day. There is no alternative. We cannot, if we would, live beneath any different government, or be judged by any other rule. Why, then, so anxious for the good opinion and the honor of men? Why so afraid of their ridicule or their censure? Let us rather say, with the apostle, "It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment; he that judgeth us is the Lord." Let us especially listen to the words of Christ: "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear Him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell; yea, I say unto you, FEAR HIM!"

SERMON XII.

THE DUTY OF USEFULNESS.

1 CORINTHIANS X. 24.

LET NO MAN SEEK HIS OWN, BUT EVERY MAN ANOTHER'S WEALTH, [OR WELFARE.]

THE precepts of the gospel sometimes fall in with, and sometimes oppose, the natural feelings of the heart. Every disposition and propensity which is kind, amiable, and just, leading to uprightness, truth, and virtue, Christianity smiles upon and cherishes. Every disposition and propensity which leads to falsehood, malice, and mischief, it frowns upon and condemns.

One of the strongest natural feelings is self-love. It is inherent in all beings. Whether rational or irrational, whether more or less exalted, they all love themselves and seek their own happiness. This principle in man is rebuked or countenanced by the doctrine of Christ, according to the manner in which it is modified by other principles. If it be single, unmixed, uncontrolled, the only motive which governs the character and directs the life, it is then a thorough selfishness, which leads to all sin, and is utterly and peremptorily denounced. But when it is kept under sober control, regulated by reason, limited by regard to the rights and happiness of others, and to the laws of equity, kindness, and truth, then it is allowed and advocated by

Christianity. Our Lord would blot out and destroy none of the native characteristics of man; he seeks but to correct, renew, and exalt them. And in doing this, he applies a man's love for himself as the rule by which to regulate his love for his neighbor — *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;* a precept, which has been nowhere better paraphrased than by Dr. Watts:

> "And let thy kindness to thyself
> MEASURE AND RULE thy love to him."

"No one," says the apostle, "ever hated his own flesh;" neither does God require it of him; but so to control his partiality for it, as that it shall never interfere with the regard which is due to his neighbor. Accordingly, it is the purpose of the gospel to bring the benevolent principle to an equality, as far as possible, with the selfish. It would adjust the one by the other, graduate them side by side, and make them equal, active, and successful partners in the promotion of human happiness. And, as "love is the fulfilling of the law," it would thus instruct the Christian to perform all his duties toward man, with the same ardor and fidelity with which he instinctively follows the promptings of self-love and the natural desire of happiness.

To effect this, is obviously no slight operation. It is part of that great change which the gospel contemplates in the character of man. It is not to be denied that originally the selfish principle predominates. The human creature, on first coming into existence, while as yet the only being of whose happiness he knows himself to have any charge, and before the reasoning faculty has attained any supremacy over the animal nature, cares for his own happiness without respect to that of others, and readily sacrifices their interests to his. And indeed, notwithstanding all which has been

effected by education, experience, and Christianity, this instinctive principle of self-love still retains in too many its ascendency over the character, and stifles the growth of the benevolent sentiment. But this is to be changed by the spirit of the gospel, which addresses its rebuke to the selfishness of the soul, and breathes into it the most extensive and disinterested generosity, and publishes precepts of kindness and regard for others the most distinct and positive. "Love thy neighbor as thyself." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare."

Here, you observe, there is nothing optional. It is not left to a man's opinion, or judgment, or convenience, or interest. But it is bound upon him as a duty. The authority which makes it a duty to be honest, makes it also a duty to be generous; and no more leaves it to a man's choice whether he may be benevolent, than whether he may be just.

This is placing the matter in a light in which many seem unwilling to regard it. Men would claim the greater virtue in their charity from being allowed, as they fancy, not to be charitable except they please. But no such permission is given in the gospel of Christ; and, therefore, he who avoids this virtue, must bear the double shame of having no heart for the most amiable of all graces, and no allegiance for the highest of all authority.

These remarks are sufficient to introduce the point which I have specially in view. Since the Christian religion is thoroughly adverse to all selfishness, and to every mode of life which is governed by selfish views and devoted to selfish ends, it is an obvious consequence, that it is man's duty, in all his habits and pursuits, to have regard to others as well

as to himself; that is, as it is expressed by Paul in the text, *to seek not only his own welfare, but that of others also.* This is saying, in other words, that it is every man's duty to be as useful as he can. To this point your attention is invited; and I ask you to look at it practically, not as a matter of speculation, or an abstract proposition in ethics, but as a rule of actual life, to be applied to the government of your habitual conduct.

My doctrine is, that there is an obligation on men to lead useful lives, and that every man is bound to make usefulness his rule in his plans and pursuits.

That is to say, a man is not to regard himself as an insulated being, sent upon earth only for his own happiness; but as one of a multitude, for all of whom the common Parent equally cares, and whose happiness he is therefore not at liberty to disregard. This consideration should always be present with him. In forming his plans of life and projects of personal good, he is to inquire whether they interfere with the interests of another. If so, no profit which they may bring to himself will excuse him for prosecuting them. He may have a *legal* right to go on and advance his own interest, however it may be to the detriment of another. He may trample on the poor man, his neighbor, and avail himself of the defencelessness of the widow, and take advantage of the unskilful in trade, and obstruct the inexperience of youth. But all this, which the policy of the world may allow, the kind spirit of the gospel, yes, the eternal rule of equity, condemns. So, also, of the character of his pursuits. He may have a *legal* right to enter upon any occupation which shall grant a livelihood, or make him rich, without regard to its injurious operation on others. But he has no *moral* right, no *Christian* right, to do it. He may erect a building for the single purpose

of spreading the temptations to intemperance, or for affording accommodations and enticements to gambling, or for pernicious entertainments which corrupt the taste and debauch the morals of the community; the law may grant him its honorable license, and spread over him the wing of its strong protection; it may, perchance, be the most profitable employment which he can follow; it may yield to him a more generous support than is given to the teachers of your high seminaries of learning, the ministers of the everlasting gospel, or the magistrates and legislators of the land. But what then? He is still living by iniquity; he is engaged in spreading corruption; he flourishes on the ruin of his fellow-men; his prosperity is in proportion to their disgrace, and he lives by hastening their death. Whatever human laws may say, he has no right to do this. It was not for this that he was sent into the world. Both natural morality and Christian precept cry out against this prostitution of his power, and lay upon him their imperative injunction to pursue an occupation innocent at least, if he cannot make it absolutely beneficial.

And here it may be necessary to observe a distinction; for I have no intention of straining a point of duty beyond reasonable bounds. It would do injury to a cause which I have greatly at heart. We are not, then, to interpret this obligation of usefulness so straitly as to infer that no pursuit is allowable but such as promotes *directly* the welfare of other men or of society. If we should insist upon this, it is plain that the major part of men would find no occupation. It must be accounted sufficient that a man's calling be not injurious, or that it be indirectly useful to the whole, by its benefit to those whom Scripture calls HIS OWN. For it is worthy of observation, that that skilful system of the "division of labor" of which man has so happily availed

himself, as a fortunate invention for the advancement of human improvement, has been most beautifully exemplified in the original constitution of things. The great Founder of society has provided for its welfare by committing it, in separate small portions, to the care of separate responsible individuals, dividing the whole into families, each having its own head and protector. There it is that every man's first duty lies; and a large portion of mankind have little allotted to them beyond this natural sphere of their action. Providence has committed to them nothing more than the charge of their "own households." It is enough, then, as regards the general welfare, that the business by which they support their families be of no detriment to other men. They are not required to make it directly subservient to the general good.

It is to be observed, further, that, in a civilized state of society, there are many callings essential to the general comfort and refinement, which cannot be, and ought not to be, dispensed with, which can yet in only a very secondary sense be denominated *useful.* Much that pertains to the habitual conveniences and accommodations of polished life, to the graces and elegances, without which society returns to a barbarous state, to the arts, and the fine arts, is to be numbered among matters which no one could pursue, because useful in a strictly religious sense. Yet they are so indispensable to the highest advancement of human society, that they are not to be proscribed by religion. They were too scrupulous interpreters of religious obligation, who forbade to Christians the arts of music, and painting, and all ornamental accomplishments. They are not, it is true, to be ranked with the labors of instructors, pastors, magistrates, and philanthropists. But they fill a necessary place. Society could not well do without them. They are like the

inferior members of the body, less honorable than the head and the main limbs, but not therefore to be despised. All cannot be teachers, all cannot be magistrates, all cannot be philanthropists. "If the whole body were the head, where were the body?" But they have their place, and in that place their office is serviceable. And be it remembered, that the conscientious man may always make his occupation *directly* useful, by devoting a portion of its gains to useful ends, and of its leisure to works of kindness and social good. This he will perceive to be his duty. He will feel that superfluous gain and occasional leisure are allowed him, not to be thrown away in frivolous folly or wasteful self-indulgence, but that he may enjoy the privilege, which his actual avocations in life do not allow him, of doing immediate good. To neglect such opportunities he would feel to be *seeking only his own*, and not regarding *another's welfare.*

Thus much concerning the general obligation of usefulness. Let me now state *some of the reasons on which it rests.*

And here I might content myself with repeating and urging what has already been advanced respecting the spirit and precepts of the gospel. But as we have seen them to be very clear and decisive, and as God has not laid this obligation on us by the gospel only, but by various other intimations of his will, we shall learn more completely how positive and irresistible that will is, by looking at some of the many other ways in which it is testified to us.

1. In the first place, then, he has plainly intimated his will *by the nature which he has given us.* Our earliest feelings, it is true, are absorbed in ourselves. But we no sooner enter on the experience of society, and become capable of understanding the situation of others, than our

hearts are drawn out toward them, and we instinctively desire that they also should enjoy. We find ourselves capable of sympathy in their wants, anxiety for their sufferings, tears for their distress; and why is this, except that we may be thus prompted, by a spirit within, to act for their relief? Why man placed with man, and made to lean on man? why talents given to one which are refused to another? why some made to possess what others want? except that they may aid and impart to one another. You perhaps might have expected that the Creator should provide one vast storehouse of gifts, whither each should resort, and supply his wants freely, and enrich himself to the extent of his necessities and desires. But do you not see that this simple and easy method would have made every man inveterately selfish? Whereas the beneficent Creator has accomplished the same end by a method which tends to root out that odious characteristic — not by establishing one common storehouse from which all should receive, but by distributing his gifts among men, and causing them to receive from one another — so that, while all should be supplied, it yet might be a ministration to mutual necessities, by the action and reaction of benevolent feelings, and the interchange of the kind offices of self-denial and beneficence. To refuse to exchange gifts, as far as possible, with your fellow-men, and share with those who need the blessings you possess, is the same sort of criminality, as if, one general depository having been provided, you should stand watching at the door, and prevent any one from receiving his just and intended portion.

2. God has further testified to us his will *by the situation to which he has appointed us.* It is a state of mutual and reciprocal dependence. Not an individual has he placed where it is possible for him to stand without leaning

on a fellow; or where his fellow can fall without needing his support. If he had pleased, it might have been otherwise. He might have rendered nothing necessary to his creatures, but the support of his own hand; and in that case we should have been exempted from all obligation to useful action. But he has delighted, on the contrary, to make his creatures necessary to one another, and to create mutual calls for aid, in order that they might be knit together in bands of brotherly affection and social happiness. For he knew that their happiness must depend on the state of their affections; and this must depend on the exercise of those affections; and in order that they might be thus exercised, he made them to minister to one another what he might have easily done for them by his own direct act. He has thus made it binding on each to do something for others — an obligation which every man transgresses who "seeks his own," and does not strive to be useful.

3. He has further enforced this obligation *by his own example.* We read, "Be ye imitators of God, as dear children;" * and it is but reasonable that the children should be required to resemble the parent in those points which are characteristic of him. And what is it which characterizes the administration of God? Is it not beneficence? Is it not utility? What has he made, what has he done, except for some useful end? In all the expenditures of his universe, what has been expended except *to do good?* In the exhaustless resources of his wisdom and power, where there could be no want and no waste, how is every thing arranged and adapted to perform some useful office, and occupy its place for good! Look at the works of nature and the operations of Providence. You see that his sun rises on the

* This is the more exact rendering of Eph. v. 1.

evil and on the good, and his rain descends on the just and on the unjust, and "from seeming evil he still educes good, and better thence again, in infinite progression." Even what might appear, at first sight, to be only designed for ornament, or given up to waste, is yet rendered useful; the desert and wrathful sea is made to nourish its innumerable tribes, and to promote those enterprises of man which it might seem especially calculated to hinder. And the flaunting flower, which one might think born only to look beautiful and die, is yet made the dwelling-place of myriads of living creatures, and nourishes an empire, joyous and populous, on every leaf. Why, then, should not man learn to regard what is useful even in trifles and ornaments? Look at the dispensations of divine grace. There, also, is the same design visibly illustrated. Nothing for display — nothing to excite the mere admiration of his creatures — nothing to elicit the barren applause of reasoners and philosophers; but all simple, substantial, good; — doctrines, disclosures, prophecies, not to overwhelm and astonish, not to gratify an eager and thirsting curiosity, but only such as will profit, elevate to devotion, excite to holy desires, renew the affections, build up an elevated character, and save the soul. These are declared plainly, explicitly, practically; and they teach us — if I may venture reverently to say so — what God had most at heart, to make a revelation which should be *profitable to his children.* Let his children, then, be imitators of him. Let them strive in all things to be in like manner profitable. Let them regard it as a privilege to be permitted to copy so glorious a model. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." And what does the apostle add? "Beloved, if God so loved us, *we ought*

also to love one another." We ought to feel the obligation to do good always, because he does good always.

4. The obligation is also laid upon us by the example of Jesus Christ. "Ye call me," said he, "Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet." Here, by one striking instance, he points out the use we are to make of all his acts. And what were they? Acts of usefulness. His life was devoted, consecrated, to useful labors. He went about doing good. He was absorbed in this occupation. No matter for himself; no matter for his own convenience, comfort, or rest. God had given him power over all things, and put in his hand the agents of nature and the elements of the world to wield them at his pleasure. But he never employed them to work a miracle for his own benefit. When others hungered, he fed them; when others suffered, he relieved them; but for his own suffering and hunger he made no provision, though a word would have changed stones into bread, and called around him twelve legions of angels. No; self-sacrificing and disinterested, "he that was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." What an example is here! Beautiful, illustrious, divine! How does it shame the inaction, selfishness, self-indulgence of us his disciples! He lived for mankind; we live for ourselves. He sacrificed every thing, even life, for man and his redemption; we are reluctant to make sacrifices, not barely for others, but even for ourselves. He went about doing good; and we go about — it is a plain phrase, but only too true — to build up our own fortunes. Can we look at ourselves and not blush with shame, I do not say at finding that we are so far behind him, but that we are even so far unlike him?

His first disciples did imitate his example. They felt that it laid them under an obligation. They had imbibed his spirit, and the same mind was in them. To be Christians, and to be devoted to the interests of their fellow-men, were with them the same thing. "Brethren," said they, "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." And in the energy of that love they went forth, with blessings at once for the bodies and the souls of men; making contributions among the brethren for their wants, working miracles for their health, founding churches for their salvation. Peter toiled with his Master's disinterested zeal, and John with his Lord's serene and gentle affection; and Paul, the champion, spread the first peaceful triumphs of the cross, over those very regions where Alexander had first raised the banners of his desolating conquests. A fit contrast between the spirit of religion and the ambitious spirit of the world! that where the greatest among human princes had scattered misery and death, there the greatest of Christian preachers should be employed to proclaim peace and life.

So has it been through all succeeding ages. Those who have drunk most deeply the spirit of Jesus, and entered most fully into the genius of his religion, have been distinguished for their labors in behalf of their fellow-men. When you name one eminent among Christians, you name one who has sought in some way to be useful; who has lived, not for himself only, but has endeavored to follow his Master in living for others. When Christianity became corrupted, its professors shut themselves up in convents and monasteries to dream away life in religious reverie; they thought to come nearer to God by forsaking man, and thus lost the opportunities of virtue by seeking nothing but spiritual purity. Contrast the lazy, luxurious religion of the

cloister, with the active habits of him who went about doing good; contrast the monk in his cell with Paul upon his travels, or the good Fenelon in his diocese; and you have two pictures of what is and what is not the spirit of the gospel. You see that when a man ceases to be useful, he ceases to act the Christian; and that he only may be satisfied with himself, who, according to his opportunity and ability, lives over his Lord's life of beneficence. Or, to take up the words of Jesus,* he only may regard himself as the child of his Father in heaven, who strives to resemble him who is good to all — causing "his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his rain to descend on the just and the unjust."

Many other considerations might be added to those which I have now adduced. But these must suffice. Let them be weighed, and they must be felt. If we understand our relation to the common Father, and to the members of his great family; if we consider the structure and order of society; if we enter into the beneficent purpose of the Christian dispensation, which is to reorganize human society, and so carry its peculiar blessing to every habitation and every heart; if we have any regard for the interests of our race, have ever considered of what improvement it is susceptible, and how that improvement is to be brought about by the combined ministration of many minds and many hands; then we shall feel that we have a part to act, from which it would be criminal to withhold ourselves. We shall know that, to live for ourselves, and waste our talents and means on personal indulgences and selfish gratifications, with no inquiry or care whether we aid or injure our fellow-beings, — we shall know that this is a great sin. We shall

* Matthew, v. 48.

be as content to live vagabonds as to live useless. We shall see but the shadow of difference between hoarding wealth with a miser's meanness, and spending it with a worldling's selfishness; between the baseness of directly defrauding by dishonest acts, and defrauding indirectly by squandering on our own persons what God meant for the happiness and virtue of many.

I entreat the *man of influence* to think of this. God has given him talents, and placed him where others feel them. How will he have them felt? By displaying how skilfully he can bring all around him to subserve his ends, and promote his interests, and toil for his aggrandizement or pleasure? This is the purpose to which influence has often been directed; but let him spurn the base selfishness. Let him feel that he holds in trust this gift of Heaven — in trust for the advantage and blessing of others; a trust which is abused and forfeited when devoted to his single benefit. Let him feel that he has nothing but what he has received, and that, as God has thus "made him to differ," so he will strictly inquire of him at last if this difference have made him a blessing or a curse to others. He will, therefore, be persuaded, that, even if his own happiness were the end of existence, it cannot be that happiness which grows out of a selfish regard to present gratification; but only that final and permanent good which belongs in heaven to the soul which has applied its powers to effect the great objects of God's paternal love.

Let the *man of leisure* apply this subject. From whatever causes his leisure may spring, let him remember that it is not an exemption from duty; that it does not banish him from the honorable company of the useful; that it does not exempt him from the obligation, nor debar him from the privilege, of laboring for others, though he have no need of

toil for himself. He is rather to regard this exemption from toil for his own sustenance as an intimation of Providence that he should devote himself to others. Life is not to be wasted in indolence, because God has supplied daily bread without its being earned. Nay, let him earn it by good works. Society has a right to his services. It may imperatively claim from him the hours which are not necessary to himself, and he cannot discharge his duty but by engaging in its service. Let him not, then, be a drone in the great hive of this busy and needy world. There are a thousand objects to which his counsel and time may be advantageously applied. There are the poor to be relieved, the afflicted to be comforted, the wronged to be righted, the wicked to be warned, the ignorant to be taught, the young to be instructed, the arts, the sciences, the cause of humanity, of civilization, of truth, of religion, to be advocated and carried forward; and in some of these labors, why not occupy his time and engross his affections? There are some men of leisure, who appear to think that they have no concern in the world but to live and act the gentleman: in which notion, they flutter about society the most insignificant and worthless of God's creation; having nothing to do, therefore doing no good; having nothing to do, and therefore feeling themselves licensed to do evil; and, that they may pass away time and get rid of a tedious life, chasing frivolous pleasures, plotting the destruction of innocence, betraying unwary youth, and destroying, perhaps, body and soul in guilty indulgence. Or, supposing that they proceed no further than to be thoroughly worthless; yet this is not at all tolerable in the eyes of Him who knows that man is rational, and that his powers are bestowed for valuable purposes. How can he do nothing when there is so much to be done? Why will he leave no trace behind

him of his existence, when he might make the world better? Why will he be satisfied to eat, and drink, and lounge away a trifling existence, and be forgotten, when he might aspire to praiseworthy deeds, and come to a lamented end? Let him remember that leisure is life — the vast and responsible gift of the Author of all; and let him beware of the folly of wasting that which he is so anxious to enjoy forever.

Let the *man of wealth* apply this subject, and learn to seek, in its expenditure, not barely his own, but the welfare of others. Why should he squander on himself sums which are adequate to the support of a multitude? Why gratify himself only, when he might gratify thousands? Why devote to luxuries and amusements, which perish with the money that is paid for them, sums which might constitute him a public benefactor? which might provide abodes for the miserable during centuries, might lay the foundation of institutions where the ignorant of generations yet unborn should find instruction, might be promoting the progress of truth and human improvement for ages to come? Why leave behind him no monument of his privileged existence, except his tombstone, — which can only serve to remind men that he was rich and worthless, — when he might build one that should make his name familiar and dear as long as earth shall stand? One would think that even selfishness would persuade, I was going to say would *tempt*, the rich man to a generous bestowment of his treasures. Let him remember, also, that they are not his own, except as they constitute part of his earthly trial, and that he must answer for their use to Him who bestowed them. He will then be unable to squander them selfishly and unprofitably. Let him study the rule of human duty, let him reflect what is due to his Maker and his fellow-creatures, let him think of the future as well as the present, of the end as well as the enjoyment;

and he will not — he will not *dare* — follow that miserable company of selfish beings who have thought of nothing beyond themselves, and of whom nothing is remembered but that they were rich; who have thrown away, with a folly inconceivable to a generous mind, their golden opportunities of spreading knowledge and happiness around, and showering blessings on the world. If such a one hears me, I speak to him as to an accountable creature of God, and entreat him to reflect upon his obligation to be useful. I exhort him to remember that wealth can be of any value to him only until his death; but that there are objects of private charity, of public good, of lasting beneficence, which would outlive him and his heirs, and which he would rejoice to meet as witnesses for him in the day of the Lord. I exhort him, by his faith in the gospel, by his hope of heaven, to give diligent heed to the words of the apostle — "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth all things richly to enjoy; that they do good; that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

But there are still others to be considered, who reckon themselves to be persons neither of influence, leisure, nor wealth, and are, therefore, ready to believe that the duty of usefulness has no application to them. "*I* can do no good," is the language which such a one would employ; "what is there that I can effect in my unimportant station and with my limited powers?"

Perhaps not much, it may be replied; but something — a little. And are you sure that your feeling is not pride? You are too proud to do so little. Be more humble, then.

Be willing to stoop to wash the saints' feet, or to give a cup of cold water to a disciple, and you will then find something to do. And remember that the question is not, whether you do *much*, but whether as much as you can. Our Lord's commendation was, "She hath done" — not a great act, but — "*what she could.*" Do not suffer yourself to fall short of this.

But perhaps you are oppressed with a real humility; you do actually fancy yourself too mean to be of any service. Then, let me say, you do yourself great injustice. Do you not remember that the widow's mite was accepted? Do you not know that God accomplishes great things by small agents? and that in a vast machine, like that of human society, the minutest tooth of the smallest wheel is essential to the regular operation of the whole, and the production of the final result? Perhaps you may be of no visible benefit to the public at large, or to the church universal. If so, it is not required that you should be. But there is a sphere in which you are not insignificant. You are a friend, a neighbor, a member of a family; one of a small circle, in which your example is seen and your actions felt. You have a little wealth, a little leisure, a little influence; and if you will bear it in mind, a slight favor, a kind hint, a seasonable word of advice, a silent nod of encouragement, a gentle look of reproof, may do good which the recording angel will smile to enter in. What right, then, have you to set it down as a maxim, that you can do no good?

If you inquire for *means* of usefulness, they are many. They cannot be missed by him who really desires to find them. I have suggested not a few in the progress of this discourse, and there is one which it is my special duty to lay before you. The ladies of the society on whose account we have come together, present to you an example, and afford to you

an opportunity, of well-doing, such as may illustrate our subject, and ought to call forth our charity.

I say they present to you an example; not of great and splendid beneficence; but of the very thing which you most need, of calm, unimposing, persevering usefulness, followed from a sense of duty. They have not been satisfied to live for themselves, and perform the personal and relative duties from which they could not escape, and which may be performed from the force of circumstances, without any principle of duty. But they would live in some measure for others. They would engage themselves regularly and systematically in doing something for the less favored children of misfortune. They have seen that, in this large city, there is much poverty — honest, meritorious poverty — which may labor, and live by its labor, in health; but which, in times of sickness, is depressed at once to the extreme of wretchedness. That visitor from God is a different messenger when it comes to the downy and curtained bed of the affluent, from whose comfortable chambers both light and weather are excluded, and on whose carpeted floor the foot falls without disturbing, and around whose pillow friends, physicians, and nurses wait tenderly night and day; and when it comes to the straw pallet of the laboring poor, covered with a few insufficient rags, which afford scanty protection from the cold wind that whistles through the crevices and broken glass, on which the suffering patient lies exposed to noise and intrusion, perhaps in the only room of the house, in which all the business of the family is transacted, and where neither quietness nor attendance can be secured. To such desertion does sickness introduce many; and to such would the ladies of this society administer. They enter the apartment, and the scene changes. A comfortable bed is placed beneath the suffer-

ers' aching limbs. Clean and warm clothing covers them, affording a luxury as efficacious as medicine. Little comforts, which the sickly fancy craves, and which poverty can seldom know, are placed by the bedside; and the reviving or lingering invalid, seated at her own replenished hearth, is made to feel the double luxury of ease, and of gratitude to those who brought it. If a mother, she looks around, meantime, on her naked children, for whom she has no longer strength to ply the needle, and sees that the same kindness forbids them to suffer from her inability. Who does not feel that they do well who are useful thus? These are services in which it becomes woman to engage. This is her appropriate sphere. Who would not be gratified to know that his wife, or his sister, or his daughter, was engaged in such ministrations of love? Who would not esteem them the more lovely when they returned from these messages of charity? For where is it — if I may borrow a sentiment from another — where is it that woman is most truly an angel? Not where she is most frequently called so — in the splendor of high life, in the circle of fashion, weaving the graceful dance, and attracting crowds of attendant admirers, brilliant in her native beauty, sparkling with ornaments, and blushing at her own praises. No; but when she goes out on errands of benevolence, to cheer the widow's heart, to dress the shivering limbs of the naked orphan, to watch at the pillow of the sick, and whisper consoling words to the heart of the desolate and friendless. There, occupied in the work of Heaven, in the spirit of Jesus, she is indeed an angel — "a ministering angel." The comforted sufferer looks up to her as such, and blesses her; and we may believe that the unseen messengers of Heaven smile upon her and salute her as a fellow-laborer of love.

They have thus given you an example of usefulness. I

said, also, that they present you an opportunity, by inviting you to join in their quiet, unostentatious employment. They solicit you to aid them in providing means for these charitable services, and to fill their hands when they go abroad on these purposes of benevolence. Their opportunities of doing good are more numerous than they have the means of answering; and not for themselves, but for the poor objects of their care, they have ventured to come up here, and, while they seek the blessing of God, appeal to your sympathy for aid. They have taken the burden of the work; they undergo the toil; and it is not without reason that they look to others for means of adding to the comforts which they render. And you, who are able, by a small exertion, to throw together, this evening, a sum which would afford essential relief to many, and who have not the leisure to search them out and minister to them in person, ought to rejoice in the opportunity of intrusting your alms to those whom experience has taught to apply them with the greatest kindness, fidelity, and effect. They have already been, in many instances, the willing and gratified almoners of some who possess the means, but not the necessary time; and have been able for fourteen years to extend a relieving hand to those that were ready to perish. But they have, at all times, been obliged to pass by many more objects of interest and want, to whom they had no bounty to extend. Amidst all the pleasure of bestowing, they have experienced also the pain of refusing. It is for you, this evening, to diminish that pain, by enlarging their ability. In their behalf and for their sakes, and in behalf of those whose friends and visitors they are, I entreat you to enlarge their means. The season of wind, and storm, and pinching cold, is hastening on; and many are they who must lie down in sickness on beds which give no warmth, and see their little ones half

naked and half starved around them, to whom the charity of this evening may carry warmth, and clothing, and comfort. Let us, then, before we retire to our own pleasant apartments and happy firesides, before we lie down upon our pillows in chambers where want and discomfort are unknown, let us send our messages of sympathy, through these ladies, to those who are unacquainted with our blessings. Let us do it as an offering of brotherly love; because nature pleads for them in our hearts. Let us do it as an offering of gratitude to Him who has appointed to us a more desirable lot. We shall feel the happier, as we lay ourselves to rest, and commit our spirits to the Protector of the night, in the reflection that this portion, both of our time and of our substance, have been usefully employed.

SERMON XIII.

SOURCES OF MORAL WEAKNESS AND MORAL STRENGTH.

PSALM XXXI. 10.

MY STRENGTH FAILETH BECAUSE OF MINE INIQUITY.

In nothing, perhaps, are the differences among men more striking than in the degree of moral strength and weakness which distinguishes their character. With the same natural elements, and in circumstances greatly similar, they present the most astonishing contrasts as creatures of moral power; some being strong, self-possessed, resolute, undaunted; some feeble, timid, vacillating, inefficient; — some with a manliness that goes on to bear and do, without hesitation; some retreating from action, shrinking from suffering, unmanned by every difficulty, and yielding to every threat.

It were a great knowledge to know the cause of all these differences, and a great wisdom to make personal use of that knowledge. It is his moral strength which is to carry a man safely and triumphantly through life, bring him out right at every turn, and make him complete in the end. It is in proportion to his want of this, that he falters in the emergencies of duty, is prostrated under distress or misfortunes, and fails, if he fails, in the great result.

Let us avail ourselves of a few moments of reflection to look at a matter of so much consequence to the prospects of our future life. Let us, before we go farther on our way, ascertain the *causes of moral weakness, and seek the sources of moral strength.*

First, we are to look at our *nature and constitution.* The original cause exists in the natural imperfection of man. There is a *native* weakness. Man is not an angel. How often, accordingly, do we hear, amid the misdoings or misfortunes of men, the exclamation, *Poor human nature!* sometimes in pity, sometimes in derision, sometimes in malignity; its acknowledged constitutional infirmities being thought adequate to account for all the follies, failures, and inconsistencies, which mark the history of the race. It has within itself an innate love of ease, and of self-indulgence, which predisposes it to an effeminate shrinking from hardship. It has a cowardly fear of pain, and dislike of suffering, which makes fortitude difficult. With these traits, it becomes an easy prey to temptation; it quails before trial; it avoids effort. So that the whole history of our race, wherever we find it recorded, exhibits a downward tendency, a proneness to degeneracy, which it has required perpetual effort on the part of the greatest minds to counteract. History tells always of the struggle of civilization and virtue to sustain themselves against the proneness of the many to sink down into inaction, self-indulgence, barbarism, and crime. Every man experiences in himself this proneness; his own life is a continual struggle to maintain the better principles of duty, against the inclinations to ease and self-indulgence, which would bear him down. He feels that, through this weakness of his nature, he should sink, if he did not make effort against it. So true is this,

that no proverbial saying is more common or more easily assented to than this: —

> "I know the right, and I approve it too;
> I know the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue."

Or, as it is in Scripture, "*For what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do.*"

We are to look, then, to our *natural constitution* for one source of the weakness we are speaking of. It was intended that it should be so. Therefore we are not made angels. We are only men. And we shall never learn how to avoid the evils and sins that do so easily beset us, unless we justly look on that feeble and erring nature from which they spring. If we are not aware of these unnerving tendencies in our constitutional dispositions, if we are ignorant of, or choose not to see, this liability of man to degeneracy when left to himself, — then we shall fail to make that provision for a fundamental remedy, without which all partial expedients must be vain.

2. *Early education* is another cause; and this in various ways. A right education would be employed, from the earliest moments, in strengthening the natural weakness, counteracting the downward tendencies, and bringing out the dispositions and faculties in which the vigor of the character must lie. But, unhappily, too often it is not so. The early training tends to foster the weakness, to pamper the wrong desire, to make habitual the selfish and self-indulgent temper, and to confirm the reluctance at effort. The mistaken fondness of parents acts *with* the weakness of the child, instead of against it, and pampers the evil by injudicious softness, which it should have crushed by a rational severity. Hence the fact, so familiarly observed, that, of those men whose sturdy manliness is the vigor and glory of a generation, the great majority were trained amid early

privation and the rigid straits of a self-denying hardship; while the infancy which has been rocked in affluence and tenderness, is generally followed by inefficient manhood and imbecile age. Let him, therefore, that would know himself thoroughly, in order to form himself thoroughly, look back to his early training, and learn what are the effeminacies that may have been nurtured in his cradle.

3. Certain habits of mind, of temper, and of life, are also to be noticed as tending to create or confirm a moral weakness. And these are of more importance to be noticed than the others, not only because they are more within our control, but because they are in their nature more detrimental. The infelicities of natural constitution and early education may be counteracted by the diligent cultivation of right habits, of temper and life; whereas the indulgence of wrong habits would destroy the happiest nature, and pervert the most judicious education.

(1.) One of these is *delay* — a habit that by necessity enfeebles. Let a man be prompt, always doing what he sees ought to be done the moment that he perceives it ought to be done, and he is a man of energy. Will and act are with him simultaneous. To propose and to do are the same thing. His purpose and his will wax stronger by being never tampered with, and he is felt to be a man of power. But let him put off the execution, let him accustom himself to delay in carrying out his plans, let the ardor of the purpose cool, and every body knows that he grows to be less and less efficient. He comes to the act after he has ceased to be strongly interested in it; therefore he acts with less vigor, after other purposes have begun to share his attention; therefore with less singleness. This grows upon him, till, by and by, it is not at all certain, because he approves and resolves on a certain course, that he will ever summon the

power to accomplish it: his energies are relaxed, his will has grown sluggish.

(2.) A similar evil is an *indecisive* temper. It makes a feeble character. Who more feeble than the man who is forever considering, and never can make up his mind? It is bad enough to have one of those hasty minds that come to a decision at once, at a glance, without weighing the matter at all, and then act as if their first glance was infallible intuition. We have known such men; they can see but one side, and they see it so clearly that they never doubt they see every thing. They do not think it possible they should make a mistake, and they proceed to action at once, with the unhesitating confidence of omniscience. Very uncomfortable people they are, and very dangerous; for, with all their honesty, they are as likely to be wrong as right. There is, however, this consolation — where they happen to be right, their help to the right side is invaluable, they are so resolute, earnest, and persevering. But the others, who are forever turning a matter over and over in their minds, without being able to find out what is the true and what is the false — they are of no service to any cause: their imbecile fear of deciding wrongly prevents their deciding at all, until it is too late to do any good — a sad weakness of some very excellent people! One might not perhaps be ready to say with an acute observer, "*Indecision is the devil;*" but it certainly oftentimes does the work of the devil.

(3.) Another habit is one into which persons of a studious and contemplative turn of mind are especially liable to fall, — the habit, viz., of musing, indulging in reverie, — a habit defended by many as simply an innocent gratification, as, indeed, it may be within certain limits, but greatly in danger of overstepping these limits, and growing into a sickly and deleterious self-indulgence; substituting a delicious

play of the fancy for healthful activity of the whole mind, and stifling the moral sensibility of the heart, under a superficial and morbid sentimentality. It is not necessary to refer to all the abuses which thus creep upon minds of a factitious refinement. I speak of the habit in one single point of view. Those whose purpose it is to pursue a high virtue and attain a Christian elevation, are likely to be misled; to be beguiled into feasting the imagination on the subjects offered to their contemplation, in place of addressing themselves to the *duties* presented for their performance. Fine pictures pass before them of the admirable things that might be done, and the glory that shall be enjoyed. They lay plans, and sit dreaming of their accomplishment. They exhaust their strength of thought and ardor of feeling in visionary schemes, and following out the far consequences of enterprises they have not yet begun; and then have no strength to begin them. And thus they may spend a whole life, with excellent feelings and purposes, which bring nothing to pass; elevated views and large plans all dying as they are born; and the persons themselves dying at last, weary, sentimental, and worthless. Such men exemplify the truth of that most solemn passage in Butler's "Analogy," which unfolds the laws of the active and passive habits, and which proves that there is no process so debilitating to the character of a moral being, as this very one of exercising the thought and the fancy, without correspondent exercise of the active powers. It is sure to end in moral decay and spiritual insignificance.

(4.) Another most observable cause is *heedlessness in regard to the lesser monitions of conscience.* With many men it is, in this respect, as in regard to the lesser trials of life; concerning which it is frequently observed, that one readily summons a fortitude to bear an extraordinary calamity,

when he has no patience for petty vexations. So it happens that a man may be rigidly obedient to conscience in every momentous transaction, and yet be very heedless in respect to its monitions on slight occasions. This is a sad error, common as it may be. Conscience is as *sacred*, and should be as sovereign, in its slightest whisper or hint, as in its most peremptory and loud-voiced command. And the inevitable consequence of turning to it an inattentive ear, is to render the mind's ear dull, to blunt the sensations of the heart, and diminish the moral ability of the will, and finally to destroy all allegiance, even in important cases. We need not reason upon this. It is a well-known and acknowledged fact. Either resistance to conscience or inattention injures the moral perception. All know it. But all are not accustomed to act upon this knowledge in matters of the lesser duties. Hence they easily allow themselves to feel absolved from their obligations. "They are small matters. Inattention here can be of no consequence. It can be compensated for some other way." But the evil is not to be determined by the magnitude of the occasion, but by the effect on the man; and that never can be insignificant. Every act of disrespect to conscience, is so much poison to the soul. Let it be repeated *frequently*, as these slighter occasions arise; and there is no one great act of treason to it possible, which could have so corrupting a tendency; just as there is no one act of power which can so thoroughly destroy a stately tree, as the slow decay of time. Let a man *allow* himself in this, and by and by his moral sensibility is gone; he is as if he had never possessed a conscience; and he comes, as the Scripture expresses it, to commit "all iniquity with greediness." The curse which has been uttered against all neglect of little things, clings with tenfold force to this. "*He that despiseth small things*

shall perish by little and little." For what is there to be expected of him who puts this known slight on that divine vicegerent of God in his bosom, but the sure damnation of spiritual death?

Let us then suppose that one be thus placed, according to our description. Gifted by nature with an imperfect moral constitution, that constitution has been injured rather than invigorated by the circumstances of its early training. Entering life under these disadvantages, he goes on with habits of self-indulgence, which make effort a burden, to be avoided as much as possible: hence he postpones and delays, till his habit is that of indecision, irresolution, and consequent inefficiency. Meantime, as he shuns action, he loves a dreamy state of mind, lives in reverie, forms plans and schemes which he never attempts to execute, and, just in proportion as he delights in them as pictures, is averse to the drudgery of making them reality.

Is it strange that that man is weak? that, if an emergency arise, he is unequal to it; that he cannot stand in the swelling of Jordan; that he is swept away by the first onset; that he faints at the very thought of the encounter? The cry comes to him, "Up, quit you like a man, or you are lost!" But he cannot quit him like a man. He has lived all manliness away. A man acts skilfully only through habit; but *he* has no habit but that of avoiding action. A man only can act vigorously, who has a confident faith; but he has spent his life in cherishing timidity and distrust. He only can overcome in an emergency, who can see at once what the occasion demands, and promptly plan and promptly perform; but *he* has dreaded emergency and promptitude, till he has a nervous horror of them; and his energies are prostrated like a child, when he needs the arm of a giant.

What a pitiable object is such a man! Sent into the world to fashion a character for eternity, — and all his abilities and opportunities ending in incapacity and shame! He has less sense of right, and less love of right; less perception of the beauty of goodness, and less desire to enjoy it; less relish for things worthy, less command over his desires, less power to resist temptation, less energy in helping others, less sensibility to the calls of duty and affection, and a growing sluggishness and indifference to whatever is noblest and divine. What a pitiable object is such a man, who has been going backward all his days, and has arrived at a mature manhood, a feeble, irresolute, inefficient creature, absorbed in the miserable littlenesses of his own discontented selfishness, and having lost the capacity of even *desiring* to be or do something worthy of a man!

And as unfit to die as to live! His abuse of his excellent powers has made him the scorn and shame of earth; he has here no portion, no home, no hope. If he live, it is but to be despised by others, and to despise himself; and if he die, the venom is in his soul, and he cannot escape its bitterness in a future world. Who *there* shall be his portion? Where *then* shall be his home? On what, on whom, then shall rest his hope? His hope? It can be only "flat despair." For what blessing can await the bankrupt spirit, which has thrown away the immortal endowments of its nature, and refused to prepare for its inheritance of grace?

Let every man, then, know and consider early the perils to which he is exposed, and seek to guard himself by application to the sources of moral strength which are provided for him. For without this, "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

SERMON XIV.

SOURCES OF MORAL WEAKNESS AND MORAL STRENGTH.

EPHESIANS VI. 10.

FINALLY, BRETHREN, BE STRONG IN THE LORD, AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT.

The apostle intimates what are the real sources of human strength. It may not improperly be said, under some points of view, that this was the beneficent office of Christianity, to disclose to man the real sources of moral strength, and enable him to avail himself of them. Seeds of weakness lie in his original constitution, are fostered by the wayward circumstances of his education, and lead him to habits of self-indulgence and ease, which threaten ruin to his permanent well-being. All this we saw, as we looked upon him in our morning's survey. And now what remedy? What fountains of strength are open for the healing of this impotent race? Where are the remedies for this fatal imbecility, which destroys many, and threatens all? The apostle answers in the text; the New Testament answers in all its pages. The errand on which Christ came into the world was to relieve the feebleness of human nature, and provide strength for the accomplishment of its great warfare on earth.

It might be sufficient, then, to illustrate the position that man gets the power he wants, from religious faith.

But it may be best, first, to recur to the course of thought through which we have already passed. For if we have truly indicated the causes of infirmity, the step to be taken next, obviously is, the removal of these causes, so far as they are susceptible of removal. That which lies in original constitution may be spoken of by and by; but if any one is suffering from an injudicious training in the outset of life, it is clearly his duty to counteract its influence by daily vigilance; or, if he have fallen under habits of sloth, thoughtlessness, delay, indecision; has become incapable of effort by long inactivity; then much is to be done by specially combatting these particular ill customs; by watchfulness and self-denial in regard to specific instances of these specific faults. If you have put your conscience to silence by refusing to hear when it spoke, you must now open your ear with an earnest attitude of perpetual listening, and you will, by and by, catch its still small voice again. If you have made your will torpid by repressing or delaying to carry its purposes into action, you must now begin with springing up promptly at its slightest suggestions; and you will, by and by, restore to it all its rightful authority.

From these measures of simple counteraction, let us pass to those of a more direct character — those which open the fountains of *moral strength.*

And we may find somewhat in our *native constitution.* Human nature is not all weakness. It has its strong points also. It has its upward tendencies, as well as its downward. There is a law in its "*mind,*" as well as in its "*members.*" Reason takes the side of right. Conscience is a powerful advocate for right and advancement. The heart has nobler affections, which have no relish for what is

impure, but aspire after what is generous and high. In these, man is strong, if he will but give heed to them, and put himself under their guidance. Unhappily, they come into action later than the bodily and selfish lusts and affections, therefore begin their work at a disadvantage; when the man is already somewhat fettered, enervated by the meaner propensities; but give them an open field and fair play, they will yet get the mastery. The man has but to yield himself to them, and they will give him strength adequate to all his need. Who ever knew a man to yield himself to conscience, reason, and the nobler affections of the heart, without being strong enough for any trial, competent to any emergency?

There are sources of strength, therefore, in human nature. So, also, there are in the discipline of early education.

That training of the primary years has not its sole result in weakness. It has called for some self-conflict, self-discipline, self-denial; some struggle at self-government, at surrendering somewhat to the claims of others; some effort to bear, and to do, what was burdensome and unwelcome. And all this has tended, so far, to impart a moral power to the man over himself and over circumstances. It may sometimes be little, but always something — something, which, like a faint spark of life in a feeble system, may be nourished into more vigorous vitality.

Having, then, these resources in the original nature, and some hints, at least, from the experience of early days, we go on to look for other sources of strength to the moral being. I will name four.

1. *Universal moderation.* This stands opposed to violence, and to self-indulgence; both of which are characteristics of feebleness. Conscious strength is calm. Violence is a sign of imbecility, which thinks to impose by the show

of power. Self-indulgence withers away a man's power, sooner, perhaps, than any other cause. *Universal moderation* is therefore the law. *He that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.* Physically, the *body* thrives, and is vigorous, under the observance of this law. It dwindles, under the pampering of luxury and delicate abundance. It becomes hateful, under the coarse intemperance which brutalizes and deforms. Intellectually, the *mind* is clear, bright, quick, when a prudent moderation has left the courses of life unclogged; but is heavy, stupid, incapacitated, when the salutary measure has been overstepped. And so universally. All excess debilitates. Even excessive *thought* enfeebles the mind; and the anxious or ambitious scholar has sometimes studied himself into incapacity; and the overwrought religionist has been known to sink away from the rapturous insanity of fanaticism, to the dull monotony of idiocy. There is no true strength but in him who has self-control, and that is moderation; a perpetual and watchful restraint upon the feelings, emotions, appetite, speech, demeanor — so that nothing shall be done thoughtlessly, and the man shall always *know* whether or not he transgresses the rules of duty, decorum, and kindness.

2. A second source of strength to the character is *promptness of action;* the habit of doing immediately whatever the conscience suggests. This is a trait which marks all men of distinguished energy, and the want of which is equally characteristic of men eminent for their weakness. I have already referred to it, in another connection; and I advert to it distinctly here, because there is, perhaps, no one cause of evil more frequently forgotten and fatal than this: multitudes fall beneath this error, who are otherwise distinguished for high purposes and great virtues. It is an

insinuating, deceptive error. It comes upon one unawares. It comes under the guise of modesty, humility, discretion, and other amiable shapes; it saps the life of the character silently; gives no warning; utters no alarm; and its deluded victim finds himself enslaved, and almost lost, before a hint of danger has awakened his attention. The remedy to this great evil lies in resistance to the very beginning. *Obsta principiis.* In the beginning of life, in the formation of your young habits, start with this as a maxim. Act upon it without exception, in small things as well as in great, so that it shall acquire with you the commanding power of an irresistible instinct, that what is to be done, *is to be done*, and not put off. Then you will escape the disastrous fortune of so many, who delay the care of their souls from day to day, till death overtakes them, impenitent and unready, and they drop into ruin, who never dreamed of any thing but salvation.

3. Let us then go higher. We ascend from details to principles. Another source of moral strength is *faith.* And need I say any thing to show that faith is strength — that *principle* is *power?* Who is weak, but the man who misgives, distrusts, wants confidence, doubts? Who is strong — take him where you may, in whatever calling or walk of life — but the man who is confident in his measures, his intention, his success, who does not doubt, who feels perfect reliance? Are not these the men of enterprise? Is not this the spirit that incites to all the prosperous activity of mankind? So in the moral character. So in the spiritual life. Faith in God, Christ, heaven; the certainty of the promises, the safety of virtue, the assurance of the doctrines. Fill a man with it, and he is able to overcome the world. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth in Jesus Christ?* What is it that has made men

equal to endure, and to accomplish, the great things which have been endured, the wonderful things that have been accomplished, by the benefactors, the philanthropists, the reformers? What has made men equal to the great reform which so many have wrought out in their own character, turning from corrupt lives to holy, and from the debasement of what was earthly, sensual, devilish, to manly, Christian living? The confidence of faith is strength; and nothing can stand against him that will rely upon it. Like the confidence of Columbus, which led him through discouragements of every name and every degree, daring, intrepid, incapable of dismay, till he saw the end of his enterprise in the beauty of a new world, so is the believer able, in the simple confidence of his spirit, to brave the fears and evils of life's stormy passage, where nothing can daunt or turn him back, till he sees the end of his faith in the salvation of a heavenly country.

4. Once more. A further source of spiritual strength is *prayer*. It takes away the mind from those inferior objects and desires, which mislead, and fixes it on those which are all-sufficient — and the mind acts more strongly on those subjects by which it is engrossed. Prayer excites and controls the mind; it nourishes faith; it stirs and agitates; it kindles the good affections; it shames and discountenances all that is mean and low; it secures all the natural influences which follow confidential intercourse with one higher and better than ourselves; and also that peculiar promise of blessing and aid which is given to those who worship in spirit and truth. How can he do otherwise than increase his strength, who faithfully communes like a child with the Father, inhaling draughts of life at every breath? How can he do otherwise than grow in the might of the inner man, while that gracious promise stands recorded — "Ask and ye

shall receive. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" This it is to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Without going further, then, we have already found ample resources against the infirmity and exposure of human virtue. No man may say that provision has not been made for him. No man may excuse himself because of the weakness of *human nature* — when reason and conscience, and a heart of many fine affections, have been implanted in it; or because of the *unhappy influences of his childhood* — since mature reflection may give him wisdom to turn even those to his advantage; or for the dominion of *ill habits* of any sort — since for them he is to blame, and any common degree of fidelity to himself would furnish him with *virtuous* habits, that would be more than a match for all the pleasurable temptations of a weak heart or a cunning world. No, brethren. Protected by the elements of a religious and moral being in his very constitution; instructed how to watch over and govern them by a vigilant conscience and a perpetual temperance; armed in the panoply of a divine faith, and permitted to breathe always the invigorating air of devotion in the presence of God; he not only is not to be excused for falling into moral degeneracy through weakness of heart, but he is worthy of severe condemnation. He must feel that nothing has been left undone which might contribute to assure his steps and make certain his success: if he go down to degeneracy and ruin, it must be through some unpardonable remissness on his own part.

If any one is seeking this moral strength, let him remember that the matter is to be taken up in a religious spirit,

and conducted from religious motives. The true strength of the heavenly soul lies in its nearness to God. "Thou art my strength, O Lord." The design of its nature, the grounds of its probation, the interest attendant on its fate, all come from its kindred to God. It is because it is so endowed, and so destined, that its combat upon earth is a spectacle to angels and men. And for the man himself, while the Creator, the Savior, and the united spirits celestial, concern themselves in the immortal aspects of his warfare, — for man himself to consider it only as a concern of the day, with a view only to results that can be brought about in *time*, is to regard the great subject with a very mean estimate, and in a contemptible spirit. It is true that infirmity of will, want of self-control, irresolution, indecision, and the general feebleness which these faults imply, do unfit a man for success and power in the walks of life. He that would be a scholar, must shun them; he that would gain wisdom, or wealth, or usefulness, fails if he indulges them: therefore every highest object of earth urges the necessity there is for the strength of a resolute, self-sustained, and persevering virtue. But this is not sufficient for the whole purpose of man's probation. There is more than scholarship, wisdom, wealth, and success. There is the perfection of goodness, there is the inheritance of heaven. These cannot come without religious principle. These are the trophies of the good fight of faith; these are the benedictions of the Father, given to the children who serve him. And I say again, therefore, that we regard the matter in a contemptible spirit of littleness, if, while the Creator has instituted this great combat, with a view to its *immortal result*, we can carry it on with a view to *earthly and temporal* ends alone.

Let us take the highest view, and we shall, at the same

time, secure the lower; but if we aim at the lower, we shall lose the higher, and that loss is infinite.

If any one, therefore, perplexed and dissatisfied with his course thus far in life, is mourning the slowness of his progress; discouraged to find himself still so far short of a vigilant and self-governed virtue, still cajoled by the feebleness of his purposes, which are so fair in promise, and so seldom realized; still mocked by resolutions which are broken as fast as formed, and still a victim of temptations that he ought to be able to resist; if, thus discontented, he is inclined sometimes to despair, and cry out in the bitterness of his soul — let him know that deliverance can be found only in the absolute and total surrender to religious influences and religious motives. The strength he needs, religion only can supply. Earthly principles and motives can give strength enough for the accomplishment of earthly purposes, but not for the satisfaction of a mind that thirsts for goodness with an immortal thirst. Earthly motives can give you earthly prosperity, but cannot give health and prosperity to the undying spirit. Worldly wisdom and worldly works cannot attain the happiness of heaven. Therefore it was that Christ came, came from heaven, that he might *impart* that strength which shall enable man to reach heaven. Therefore the apostle says, "*Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.*" The moral power of man is in God. The ability of a spiritual being to do a spiritual work for a spiritual end, must be derived from spiritual sources. Hence the gospel came, with a new commission of truth, caution, motive, in order that no one who should seek, might fail of finding, the power to hold himself in holy subjection. Accordingly, it is written, "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, to as many as believed in his

name." By the truths the gospel unfolds, pouring out knowledge upon the understanding; by that energetic faith which it imparts, and which overcomes the world; by that illimitable love it inculcates, and which sweetens the temper with a universal charity; by that promise which it reveals, and in the hope of which all the sufferings of earth are light, and but for a moment; by the encouraging example and compassion of Him who is able to save to the uttermost; and by the spiritual armor of God, in which the believer may be clothed, he may find himself equal to any duty, superior to all suffering, victorious in all temptation. No longer compelled to mourn that the spirit lusteth against the flesh, and that these are so contrary to each other, that he cannot do the thing that he would, — he has put down that opposition, and is led by the Spirit alone. He no longer cries, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" For, thanks be to God, he has "*found deliverance through Jesus Christ.*"

But notwithstanding all this, the voice of complaint, that I spoke of in the beginning, still sounds in our ears. Every where among us, from those who propose to themselves a career of virtue, and are seeking the peace of a well-governed spirit, still there comes the cry of despondency. They say, "Your gospel, with all its truth, and instructions, and variety of means, we have known since we have known any thing; we have walked in its light ever since our eyes were open. But it has not strengthened us; we are still at the mercy of circumstances, slaves to our lower nature, irresolute and weak, doing what we would not, and not doing what we would." And do you not see why it is? Because you have not employed it. It is not sent to work as a charm, a talisman. It is a provision of means for you to *use.* What wonder that you have not

fought the battle successfully, when you have never put on the armor? What wonder that the maladies of your soul have not been healed, when you have never taken the prescription? You have lived under the Christian reign, as a man may live in a cultivated and learned community, and wonder he too is not a wise and learned man, — when he never has read the books, nor studied the sciences, that should make him so. *Submit yourselves* to the instructions of the gospel, before you complain that it cannot strengthen you.

But some of these desponding spirits do not allow that this has been the case. "We *have* used the means; we have made application of Christian influences." Let them be *sure* that they have surrendered themselves to them, — surrendered themselves without reserve, holding nothing back, — with singleness of soul, and in good faith. It is not a strange case, that a diseased person derives no profit from the treatment of a skilful physician, because he has not in good faith, and with absolute unreserve, surrendered himself to his advice — still has done or omitted some things which have neutralized the prescription. May it not be so with those of whom I speak? Are they perfectly *honest* in their pretensions? Do they not, after all, reserve to themselves the right to have their own will in some things? Do they not think to make a compromise, and serve two masters? So far as this is the case, no wonder that they are dissatisfied.

Not but that the difficulties of this self-mastery are great and severe; they are to many trying and burdensome, beyond the feeble power of words to express. It may be that an original infelicity of temperament is the enemy; a physical frame diseased, sensitive, irritable; every nerve naked, every fibre bare; no repose; no shelter; and the

poor creature exposed to the thoughtlessness and blasts of a rude world, touched on every side by neglect that wounds, and enjoyments that tempt! It is a terrible hardship of probation through which he has to pass! Who wonders that he sometimes inclines to despair? Who wonders that the evil counsel sometimes prevails, and that, in utter despair of ever taming down this unmanageable creature, he is ready to abandon all effort, and dare the worst? Let those happier souls to whom God has given a more tranquil nature, thank him daily, on their bended knees, for their exemption from a spiritual impediment, that might be their ruin. And let them have patience and pity, as God has, for those less favored wretches whose toils have been tenfold greater, whose struggles tenfold more faithful, and who have reaped nothing for their satisfaction, nothing but distress and tears.

Or take the other case, in which the difficulties are the result of neglected education, early bad example, and cherished habits of self-indulgence. Did you ever meet the man, who had, through these causes, become the bond-slave of the devil, and now is trying to break his fetters, and resume the dominion over himself? What trials of the soul are his! what agony and anguish! what struggles, what efforts, what floods of bitter tears, what horrors of remorseful self-reproach! like a poor wretch cast upon the waters by the storm, rushing madly upon the beach, and again, and again, and again carried back by the returning wave, till, wearied and baffled, he is ready to abandon the effort and die. God save you, my young friends, by an early obedience and steadfast virtue now, from that future burden! It is an easy thing, comparatively, now to drive out all foreign interference, to be the masters of yourselves; but give up that mastery now, let sense and sin take pos-

session — you might as well, indeed, fulfil the old fable, and write, with your heart's blood, the surrender of your souls to the prince of evil; to be snatched from his grasp at last, *if at all*, only through terrors and sufferings beyond the bitterness of death.

Let us therefore see the thing aright. *There are difficulties* — in all cases, under all circumstances, there are difficulties. The way of virtue is not all easy and flowery. It is the expectation of finding it so, and of having nothing to contend with, that causes so many to be easily disheartened when the first trial comes. A cloud drives them back, because they had prepared for nothing but sunshine. Very truly was it said, "The great reason why men are no better is, because they think it so easy to be good." Therefore they do not watch, strive, pray; and therefore they are undone. Let them understand the truth. Instead of supposing it a voyage of pleasure, let them start with the knowledge that it is an expedition of war, and they will go equipped accordingly, and, being equipped, will be able to conquer. Let them know that the warfare is within. The chief foes of the soul are those of its own household; the most difficult of all to subdue, because so ready to disguise themselves; so plausible in their appearance of friendship; so deceitful, so treacherous; and in this way, contending as they do against the soul, it is not surprising that the poor man cannot do the things that he would.

Yes, there are difficulties. No man is exempt from them. But if a man will be aware of their existence, and watch against them, and apply to the true sources of aid, as they are found in our nature and condition, and above all in the spiritual religion of Jesus Christ, he may, he must, overcome them. And let no man say or think that these are

inadequate, whatever may be the infelicities of his nature, or the power of his cherished habits. Facts are against him. More desperate cases cannot be imagined, than have occurred, of men, apparently lost in self-abandonment, given over to hopelessness and recklessness, and yet recovered, reinstated, put once more under their own guardianship — self-possessed and self-governed. Let no man think it possible that his case can be worse than some of these. Let him believe that there is a power in the resolute will, that has made a vow to stand upright, and leans against the pillars of heaven for support, which is equal to any thing. The wonderful order of Providence helps such a will; all good powers work with it; faith, and hope, and love, shed a reviving light upon it. Strong in its strength, and strong in the might of the Lord, his helper, the renewed man takes possession again of his own soul, and resumes the empire over it, which of right belongs to himself, and the terrified usurpers abdicate and flee. He is himself again. He is in his right mind. He is his own master. He is at home.

Blessed man that he is, he has found deliverance through Jesus Christ; and then, according to the promise, he and his Father will come and make their abode with him; and his fellowship will be with the Father and his Son.

Thus we can all be strong — but only truly strong, only fully equal to all conflicts and crises of our being, when we are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." "*The Lord is my strength*," said the Psalmist; and when he forgot it, he fell. "*I can do all things*," said Paul, "*through Christ, that strengtheneth me;*" and feeling that, he went on triumphantly in his holy work to the end, fought the good fight, finished his course, kept the faith, received

the crown of light. The same singleness of purpose must be ours. What we do, we must do heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men. Then we shall find ourselves strengthened with all might in the inner man; nothing will be too hard for us; nothing will discourage us; we cannot fail.

Finally, brethren, whatever may be our lot, be it always present to our thought, that the strength of the soul is in faith, and the right hand of faith is prayer.

SERMON XV.

THE CHRISTIAN CONJUNCTION: — LIBERTY AND AUTHORITY, REASON AND FAITH, LIBERALITY AND ZEAL.

MATTHEW XXIII. 8.

BUT BE NOT YE CALLED RABBI; FOR ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST, AND ALL YE ARE BRETHREN.

It is upon this text that we justify, 1. Our dissent from the great masses of the Christian church; 2. Our want of articles, and standards, around which to rally, and to which to appeal; and, 3. Our consequent diversities of belief among ourselves, — three things which are alleged against us, and which to many seem inexplicable. But how can we join any of those great religious bodies in Christendom, when, in order to do it, we must disobey this text, and take *their* authority instead of Christ's? How can we set up articles and standards of our own, when this would be calling *ourselves* Rabbi, instead of making Christ the Master? And how is it possible we should really agree in all points, — and if not really, why be anxious to appear to? — when such differences are the *inevitable consequences* of that liberty wherewith Christ, in the text, has made us free, and when these differences can be prevented only by giving up liberty?

Such being the significancy of the text, I wish to ex-

amine and apply it to our present condition amid the Christian world — a condition in many respects of extremest interest, and demanding duties of a corresponding importance. We may perhaps gain light from the doctrine of the text.

It contains two points, — a prohibition and an assertion; a prohibition to his disciples to *assume or acknowledge any human authority in religion*, and an assertion of his *own authority*. In this same sentence he declares that his followers are emancipated from all dominion of men, and that they are subjected to the dominion of Christ. *Ye are not masters;* but *Christ is.*

My purpose is, 1st, to show how, in all ages since the days of Christ, his followers have received and acted upon this injunction; and then, 2dly, to make application of the subject to the condition of the Christian world at the present time.

1. In attempting to trace the manner in which the Christian world has been affected by this doctrine of liberty, we are at once struck with the fact, that there has run through the whole history of the church a contest between the spirit of domination and the spirit of liberty. On the one side, men have assumed the right to sway opinion and bind faith; and on the other, there has always been a struggle after free thought and the right of opinion and belief. Other controversies have risen for a time, and then died away; but this has been connected with them all, and has had perpetual activity, and is at the foundation of the singular agitations of Christendom at the present time. Now, this seems a surprising fact, when we have just been reading our Lord's commandment. The apostles certainly construed this commandment so as to give no ground for such practice. James was so impressed by it, that he gives to the gospel the very title of the "perfect law of liberty." And

Paul makes it a prominent characteristic of his teaching, that conscience must be left free; that no man must assume the mastery in religion over another. "Ye are Christ's freemen. Ye have been bought with a price. Be not the slaves of men. Prove all things." This liberty of the soul, he, in various forms and many different connections, declared to be sacred and inalienable. When, for example, certain Judaizing teachers interfered at Galilee, and sought to overawe and bear sway, Paul treated their arrogant pretence with great indignation. "They came in," he says, "to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us again into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection — no, not an hour." And again, as you recollect, when he saw that, by some means or other, Peter was duped by them, he withstood that older apostle to the face, and exposed the inconsistency of his course. In the same spirit, also, he says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free." And in writing to the Romans, no inconsiderable portion of the epistle is occupied in expressly setting forth his large views of the rights of conscience and freedom of thought. He recurs to the subject in different parts of the epistle, and among other expressions uses these: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." "Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." "Why dost thou judge thy brother, and why dost thou set at nought thy brother, for we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." This is an express *re-assertion* of the very language of Jesus in our text—we are accountable to no man, but we are accountable to Christ—agreeably to which he declares in another place, "We have no dominion over your faith, but are

helpers of your joy." "Be not lords over God's heritage, but examples to the flock." Again, to all he gives exhortation. "Be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you."

In fine, without multiplying quotations, the apostles assented entirely to their Master's instructions on this point. They would not *take* any authority: they insisted that the disciples should vindicate their own freedom from authority, and also that, while thus emancipated from man, they should hold themselves absolutely subject to Christ.

One would have thought, after this, that no such thing as a pretence to spiritual power could have arisen in Christendom. One would have thought that not a teacher could have been found hardened and impudent enough to assume, nor a private believer base enough to submit to, any claim of a right to dictate to and overawe the disciples of that only Master. And yet, as I have said, the whole subsequent history of the church is marked by this very assumption. Take any age of the eighteen hundred years that have since intervened. Is it quiet? then it is kept so by spiritual oppression. Is it otherwise? then there is a contest for religious liberty.

It was not possible that all should understand every doctrine exactly alike; differences sprang up, even in Paul's time, between the Jewish converts and the Gentile converts; and in John's time, afterward, between the common Christians and those who had been converted from philosophical systems; and subsequently, when larger numbers of the old philosophers became Christians, they brought more and more of their philosophical notions with them, and by their help attempted to explain and illustrate the Christian doctrine. This multiplied confusion and difference. We should expect that the true disciples of such a freedom-loving master as Christ, would have said with Paul, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" "We have no

dominion over your faith;" and so would have allowed these discussions to go on, and the philosophers and theologians to come to such agreement as they could. But no; Christ had patience with his disciples; God has patience with his church; but the leaders of the church could have no patience with their brethren. They summon councils, and utter anathemas against opinions which they account error. They call in the emperor, and place him, with sceptre and sword, to preside in the council. And he uses sceptre and sword, and dictates terms of communion, and establishes by statute what shall constitute the true faith, and imprisons and fines those who think otherwise. What a character to Christian history has this terrible mistake given! thus putting the commander-in-chief of the Roman armies at the head of the Christian church! making that a record of wars and blood which Christ would have had a record of peacemakers and grace! making that a kingdom of this world which he had pronounced to be not of this world! producing a *bondage* of the sons of God, when he had proclaimed the liberty of the sons of God!

As we look upon the history of these early and the following centuries, the two objects which seem to engross the scene, are, on one side, the palace, where one class of believers sit on thrones, clothed in scarlet, faring sumptuously, guarded by soldiery, and uttering the thunders of spiritual despotism; on the other, the prison-house, with its dungeons, where the other class have endured imprisonment and torture, and ended their days in ignominy and fire. These are the two emblems of the manner in which arrogant man has been pleased to trample upon a fundamental article in the constitution of the kingdom of the Prince of Peace!

The reformation was an insurrection of outraged Chris-

tendom against this unrighteous state of things. It was an effort to restore the supremacy of Christ in place of the usurpation of man. It is true, it accomplished its work imperfectly. The reformers themselves, by and by, fell into the same error, and took to themselves the same authority they had wrested from the pope. But they could not take all. They had unbound the spirit of liberty, and they could not chain it up again. And, therefore, the distinction of the Protestant world has been, that the rights of the mind are better understood, and more fully allowed, than they ever were before; and are more and more so every day. This has, at length, brought on the present condition of the Christian world.

Let us turn our attention to this. It is in many respects a peculiar condition, about which there is sometimes expressed a great deal of apprehension and solicitude. Some look at it with faces almost of despair, as they wonder in themselves whereunto these things will grow.

We must recollect, that, if we would ever have a correct understanding of the *condition of religion* in the community, we must have a right apprehension of the condition of the community in other respects; since its religious state is not something separate from all else, but connected with all else, and must be greatly affected by the ideas and feelings, and influenced by the knowledge or ignorance, which prevail on other subjects.

This is especially to be remembered in considering so marked a period as that through which we are passing. It is a period characterized by universal activity. In every direction, nothing strikes us more than movement, excitement, eagerness. Nothing is done calmly. There is no repose in mind or in action. It shows itself in business; and to what results, good and evil, has it not led! It shows

itself in those great enterprises that have built up everywhere new methods of intercommunication, which it causes to be thronged with moving multitudes. It shows itself in the action of political parties; in the tone of the public press; in the astonishing multiplication of books; in projects of philanthropy, and schemes innumerable for the improvement of individuals and the advancement of society. This is the character of the age; in carrying out which every body has a part to act, and every man acts for himself, thinks for himself, and resents the idea of being subject to any person, opinion, or project, by any bond, excepting that of his own unconstrained judgment in its favor. This spirit of independence runs through the whole. Statesmen tell us that it is the great idea of the times, that all the political controversies among the nations are but the conflict of this idea of individual, with the old, opposing idea of arbitrary power. It infects every thing. It appears for better or for worse every where. The manners of many men are made offensive by it; and our works of periodical literature and modern philosophy, have rung their changes upon it, until the glorious doctrine has almost degenerated to an insufferable cant.

And now, while the whole world is in this ferment, it must needs be that religion shall partake it. Men will not be calm in their religious affairs, when, on all other subjects of interest, they are boiling with intense activity of thought. And, accordingly, was the time ever known, when there was such activity of thought, so much discussion, and comparison of opinion, so much free inquiry and free assertion, as at the present day — the time when so many projects of enterprise, so many topics of religious speculation, were calling for zeal and argument? The mind, busy, bold, on all the ten thousand other subjects of human interest,

addresses itself to the most sacred inquiries with the same freedom; and opinions are examined and sifted, by many, who, at another time, would have taken them upon trust. And what is the consequence? Difference of opinion among those who hold to the same creed; controversies in the bosom of every denomination; a schism in every sect. In the Episcopal church, a movement begins at Oxford, and rapidly spreads over England, and across the Atlantic, shaking the ancient British Establishment to its centre, arraying bishop against bishop in these American dioceses, and threatening a deadly separation, in reality, if not in form. In the Presbyterian church, the same causes have severed its unity into the old school and the new school, which are occupied diligently, not only in the debate of grave questions of theological and philosophical interpretation, but in casting on each other the same ignominious terms of bitter anathema, which they once united to fling upon heretics. The Orthodox Congregationalists suffer with them in a similar division. In the Methodist church, the same causes are producing similar effects. A large and increasing body withdraws from the domination of the hierarchy, and erects another government, with greater equality of rights, and wider liberty of conscience. And, finally, among ourselves, the Unitarian Congregationalists, the same causes have been and are at work, making minds restless, stimulating inquiry, provoking to speculation, inducing a stronger assertion of the rights of every man's individual reason; and thus causing some to push forward, beyond the safe and venerable ground of a well-tested experience and faith, into the vague and misty regions of theory and speculative philosophy.

The whole religious world is thus alike subjected to the action of this universally prevalent cause. There is no

exception; and the several portions of each sect look with equal alarm and uneasiness on the disorderly and wayward action of those who are most under the influence of the new movement.

With this uneasiness it is impossible not to sympathize. Many are found to ask, sometimes almost in a tone of despondency, "Whereunto will these things grow?" Many, who themselves know nothing at all of the circumstances and merits of the case, are yet alarmed by reports from others, and are agitated with excitement just in proportion to their ignorance. Let us, therefore, look at this matter with a deliberate attention, so far as *our* religious connection is concerned with it.

The facts of the case seem to be something like these. Our watchword and foundation has always been, Liberty. We have taken the lead in Christendom, in insisting, as a fundamental principle, that there shall be no creed but the Bible; no master but Christ; and that no man shall be allowed, under any pretence whatever, to dictate or control in matters of religion and faith. This has been established and familiar with us as a first principle, and we have stood by it, as a denomination, to the strictness of the letter.

While thus situated, there arises in the community the universal excitement which I have described; manifesting itself, in all denominations, by the impulse it gives to independent thought and bold inquiry. It *must* affect *us* differently from any other sect. We have long ago reached the position of independence which the world is moving forward to take; and therefore, if we be moved at all, it can be only yet farther in the same direction. But it is obvious that we have already gone to the limit in that direction. We have learned out that lesson. We cannot rightfully, then, take a step farther. A step more, and liberty

becomes license. Therefore we remain where we are; and this commotion, that agitates and breaks asunder all the other sects, may pass by uncared for.

But, unhappily, all cannot thus regard the subject. Many of the young, ardent, speculative, or enthusiastic, fancy that they, too, are called upon to manifest their spirit of independence, and assert their liberty. They join the current, and go on. But see what occurs. As they had already gone to the limit that Scripture and reason required, they cannot go forward without proceeding *beyond* what Scripture and reason require; that is, into the vague and uncertain regions of speculation, theory, and philosophy, where they will "find no end, in wandering mazes lost." In their restless sympathy with this insatiable spirit of independence, they are tempted to inquire, whether they should not be independent of *Christ*, as well as of men? Why should the free soul have *any* master? Why be bound, any longer, even to Jesus?

Here, then, is the danger. And how naturally an eager spirit, not on its guard, may thus be led to overstep the boundary which God has set for the human mind, and exchange the assurances of revelation for the guesses of philosophy. And, as it is what has taken place, as well as what is likely to take place, let me delay, for a moment, to state yet more fully the nature of the peril, and the process of the fall.

It begins in an over-excited sense of freedom. Nothing is more sensitive, as we constantly witness, than the mind that is jealous of its independence. Men are known to do rash and irrational actions, for the mere sake of showing their independence. And just to prove that they are no man's slave, and are not afraid to speak out, they will purposely use forms of speech unlike those of other men, and

displeasing to other men. We have all seen such persons. They run into the poor notion, that, unless they differ from the common tone of thought, it will show that they have no independence; it will be a sign of vassalage. And so they strike off into all manner of singularities and wayward speculations.

Suppose one of this diseased temper to engage himself in religion. He soon fancies that the authority even of the Son of God is an infringement of his rightful independence; it does not become the native dignity of the soul to acknowledge any master. "The soul," he says, "has its own infallible instincts. When it meets truth, it will receive it, because it perceives it to be truth; and never for any other reason. It sees truth by its own light; discerns right by natural intuition, and needs that no one should teach it." Jesus, he acknowledges, may have had a higher inspiration, but the intuitions of every soul are inspirations, and it can submit to nothing else. When this light within confirms the affirmations of Christ, then his doctrines will be received; but not *because* he affirmed them, but only because they are seen to be true.

This is apparently the train of thought into which the state of mind we are considering is likely to run; and therefore it is that men are so anxious about the present aspect of the religious world. And not without reason. It is the direct and explicit denial of the doctrine taught in the text, and through the New Testament, which instructs us that we are to call no *man* master, *because* we are to receive Christ as master. And it is not easy to see how one is to take him as master, at the same time that he refuses to acknowledge the testimony of his teaching. If our allegiance to the gospel demand that we refuse all

human domination, on the very same ground it demands that we allow the dominion of Christ.

Let us inquire, now, with what feelings we should regard the present position of affairs, and how we should conduct ourselves in consequence of it. I shall suggest three or four considerations, which may help us, when duly weighed, to a satisfactory answer to these two questions.

The first consideration is one already named, and which is fundamental in this connection — that this is only a part of a universal movement; a part of that wide-spread action which nothing escapes, and which drives impetuous and speculative minds to extremes in every direction, and on all subjects. This consideration, certainly, should modify the feeling with which we look upon the phenomenon of which I speak. If such minds, constantly predisposed, as we may say, are thus subjected to the influence of a universal epidemic, we may be grieved, but there is no occasion for alarm, as if a peculiar curse were visiting us, as if the foundations were giving way beneath us; for it offers no presumption whatever against the solidity of the basis upon which we have hitherto rested as substantial truth. Some are ready to say, in their haste, "Well, if our views are leading to this result, the sooner we give them up, the better." But they do *not* lead to this result. In the tossings of the general mind, some individuals will come to such results; not in consequence of holding our religious doctrines, but because they do not observe the proper limits of their liberty, and abuse it to license. But what then? The foundation stands all the same. Suppose that, in the other branches of the Christian church, the times should excite the same alarm. Then it would be said, in the Episcopal church, "See these divines of Oxford; in their zeal to advance true Episcopacy, as they think, they are carrying

us fast back to Popery and the dark ages. If this be the result of Episcopacy, the sooner we get rid of it, the better." And in the Presbyterian church, — "See these speculative divines of the new school; in their zeal to advance the science of theology, they depart from our old standard, and introduce confusion, and turn the world upside down. If this be the result of Presbyterianism, the sooner we get rid of it, the better," &c. Are they foolish enough to be driven, in a panic, to such radical conclusions as these? Certainly not. They see that the evil they complain of does not grow out of Episcopacy, or Presbyterianism, or Methodism, but that it grows out of the state of the world, and does not touch, at all, the foundations of their churches. So, amongst us, the evil we see does not grow out of Unitarianism, but out of the state of the world, and does not touch the foundation of our faith, or disprove the solidity and permanency of its principles. We are not, therefore, in a sudden panic, to think that all is giving way, and throw up a great cause in despair; but are to make due allowance for the state of the world, and separate its transient and feverish influence from the sober dictates of universal reason, and stand fast by our acknowledged principles.

2. This introduces a second consideration, — viz., that a great principle, of whose truth and obligation we are perfectly satisfied, never must be given up for a moment, on account of some unhappy consequences which casually attend it. This is clear. There is no great principle, no general law, but sometimes, in individual cases, seems to operate unhappily. But it never will do for that reason to doubt it, or to discard it. We must bear the temporary hardship, as part of our moral discipline, and abide by the right, though the skies fall. Now, then, in this present

case, we have adopted this great principle of liberty — *no man our master — every mind free — every soul independent.* Can we doubt, do we doubt, that it is the just principle? Is it not as certainly the Christian principle, as it is certain that there is such a thing as Christianity? Then we cannot hesitate; cannot swerve from it, in any way or degree, any more than from Christianity. Suppose the state of the times is such as to lead some persons to abuse it; and great perils seem to arise thence; shall we, for that reason, question the obligation and safety of the principle? Why, in Paul's time, many, as he says, did the same thing — abused it as a cloak of licentiousness. What did Paul do? Did he cry out, "This is not safe; this will not do; we must forbid them their liberty; it is too dangerous; it will lead to ruinous consequences"? Not at all; he warned them against the abuse, but he still insisted on the principle. "Stand fast," he still exhorts them, "in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free." The same thing happens in all important concerns. The same thing happened at the beginning of the reformation, and Luther's great soul was torn with anguish and alarm at the licentious use which many, at that day, made of the doctrine he was preaching. He pleaded, and mourned with bitterness and tears. But he did not therefore give up his principle, or draw back from his work. The same thing occurred among the early reformers in Switzerland and in England; but they had decided that their principles and course were *right*, and therefore they pressed on steadfastly, leaving these incidental evils to be overcome in the progress of the essential and extensive good. Our course must be the same. Adhere to the principle, "All brethren, and no man master," at any rate. Guard against its abuse to the utmost of our power. If we find it abused, say so, and oppose the abuse; but never

dream, on that account, of questioning the obligation or safety of the principle; never doubt that the temporary evil will be overcome by the permanent good.

3. We thus show our adherence to one part of the law of our text. We must equally evince our allegiance to the other part — "One is your Master, even Christ." Just in proportion as we claim to be independent of our fellow-men, we must be obedient to him; *must have "every thought in captivity to the law of Christ."*

As we have seen, this is the precise point of difficulty — the difficulty of extending our notion of liberty so far as to say, "We will not have this man to reign over us." This is the very abuse we have been exposing. But it is a great duty of the times to set ourselves against it; to proclaim and to manifest, in every proper way, and at all times, our loyalty to the Son of God; and to insist on the necessity of others manifesting the same loyalty, if they would bear his name. Not, of course, by any violent measures; by any anathematizing speeches; by censoriousness, and denunciation, or excommunication; but by the arguments of reason and faith, and the persuasion of affection and brotherly love, and the example of unflinching fidelity. We must wholly rid ourselves of a feeling which is very apt to lurk at the bottom of our minds, that, after all, a man must see religious truth just as we do, if he sees it aright, and to lead us to be distrustful toward him if he sees it differently. We must have the generosity to remove this notion wholly; to believe and act as we profess and ought, on the principle that it is perfectly impossible all men should see perfectly alike, and therefore acquiesce in their seeing even *very* differently from us. The state of the times is admirably fitted to impress this upon us solemnly. All sects in Christendom, with scarce an exception, but

ours, have always taken the ground that men can, and must, be made to think and profess exactly alike. Uniformity has been their dream and their motto. Therefore they have drawn up their articles and creeds, and, strong in these contrivances to effect unity, they have severely reproached us for having no creed, and allowing men to think for themselves. And now, after all, what do we behold? After these centuries of care, and circumspection, and supervision; these articles, that declare what must be believed, and these councils, that excommunicate those who believe otherwise, — what is the result? Division, separation; every sect broken in two; no more uniformity than in this body of *ours*, which they have always reproached for want of it. This is a strong vindication of the course we have adopted; it confirms to us the insufficiency of all human measures for securing agreement of opinion, and the duty, therefore, of bearing with those whose opinions disagree with ours.

But suppose they seem to be breaking over the barrier which separates faith from infidelity? We must say that we think so, and leave them to their own responsibility; we cannot lord it over them; we must maintain our loyalty to Christ. If they are false in refusing to call him Master, we should be no less so, in trying to exercise mastership over them; and we are specially admonished to be absolutely subject to him ourselves.

4. But, finally, in the execution of this duty, we are called to no slight task — no less than to maintain sacred the just proportion between the two obligations, of which we have been speaking. And how much thought, and wisdom, and watchfulness, and self-control, and charity, and bravery, will not this demand — to be perfectly independent, and yet perfectly surrendered to the teaching of the

gospel; to follow, without scruple, the leadings of conscience, and to so guard conscience, that it shall never lead astray from the light of Jesus?

It is said, that the most perfect character is made up of the harmonious combination of the most opposite qualities, which meet together in the same person, and limit and control one another. The perfection of a human being is the exact blending together of things so unlike as body and mind, appetite and reason, selfishness and love, and so on; and the finest description ever drawn by uninspired pen of Christ's character, was occupied in showing how it was remarkable for this connection of apparently incompatible excellences, until their perfect union resulted in perfect beauty. And so, in regard to this subject before us, if we would be perfect in the discharge of the trying duty which the times call for, we must cherish and combine states of mind and heart, and even principles, which, at first sight, seem hardly in harmony with each other; absolute liberty with absolute submission to authority; the most fearless exercise of reason with the most childlike and acquiescent faith; a philosophy that seeks every where, and would know every thing, with the reception of a revelation that teaches all that is essential, and tells us that nothing can be known beyond; a devoted zeal in holding and defending our own opinions, as if the salvation of the universe depended on them, with a liberality as large and deep as the ocean of truth, cheerfully allowing every other man the same right; a zeal that never blazes into bigotry with a liberality that never degenerates into indifference.

This is the state of mind which it is our duty to endeavor to attain. How difficult for poor, excitable, impatient man! This is the character which we are called upon to form — more of heaven than of earth. It was the character of our

Master. It is to be aimed at by his followers. It seems as if we might imagine the present condition of the churches brought upon us for the purpose of showing us the admirable beauty of such a character, and of offering us extraordinary means and inducements to obtain it. Let us look at it; let us form a clear idea of it; let us attempt to realize it. Let us count it a privilege, that the emergency of the day calls us to this high and honorable effort, of exhibiting the Christian conjunction — liberty and authority, reason and faith, philosophy and revelation, liberality and zeal.

This would be carrying out the great principles on which we have always been resting. Such a character, manly, trustful, free, devout, would be an irrefragable vindication of these principles in the sight of heaven and earth. It would be the impersonation of that lauded and angelic "wisdom from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits; without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Brethren, strive for this — faithfully, prayerfully. And may the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ help us to attain unto it.

SERMON XVI.

A PARALLEL BETWEEN THE JEWISH AND THE CHRISTIAN PASSOVERS.

EXODUS XII. 11.

AND THUS SHALL YE EAT IT; WITH YOUR LOINS GIRDED, YOUR SHOES ON YOUR FEET, AND YOUR STAFF IN YOUR HAND; AND YE SHALL EAT IT IN HASTE; IT IS THE LORD'S PASSOVER.

THE passover was an event in the Jewish history of the highest importance and interest at the time of its occurrence, and which never lost its consequence in any after age. It was an event which laid the foundation of their national existence and religion. In commemorating it, they commemorated the act by which the fetters of a slavery which ground them to the dust were struck from them; by which the God of their fathers avenged them of their oppressors, and fulfilled his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; by which they received personal redemption from personal degradation, and national independence from national captivity, together with a true and holy religion, instead of debasing superstition. It was the most important incident in their history since the calling of Abraham, though that whole history was full of providential wonders. For four hundred and thirty years had they groaned and bled beneath the task-masters of Pharaoh. But now the fulness

of time was come. The Lord opened his mouth and spake, and thrust forth his hand and accomplished. "I have heard," said he, "the groaning of the children of Israel, and I have remembered my covenant, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm and with great judgments." Then came the threatenings, and then followed the plagues. And when the obstinate king still refused to let the people go free, then came the last dreadful plague, by which all the first-born of the land perished in one night; and on that very night the chain of bondage was unloosed, and "all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt."

It was in commemoration of this night and this departure, that the feast of the passover was instituted. "This day shall be unto you for a memorial. Ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. Ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever." And in order to show the urgency and hurry of that night, the commandment of our text was given, "Ye shall eat it with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand."

It was many centuries after this, that, in the land to which those fugitives then hasted, and wherein they built up the promised empire, — in the city of their kings, which had been marked by a long series of the most honorable and disastrous events, — there appeared the long-expected successor of Moses, their leader under God to their first redemption, and offered himself as their guide to a higher deliverance, a still more perfect worship, and an everlasting kingdom. With his little company of friends and ministers, — only equal in number, as *individuals*, to as many *tribes* as Moses led forth, — the Messiah sat down to celebrate the ancient passover, according to the commandment. And as he did so, he spake to them of the yet greater emancipation

from spiritual bondage which he was about to effect, and bade them, henceforth, exchange the purpose of their memorial, by consecrating it to the commemoration of their new deliverer, who was to work out the spiritual salvation, not of one nation only, but of the whole race of men. Henceforth they were to keep the feast in remembrance of him. The limited ceremonies of the Levitical dispensation were ended; the economy of the one peculiar people was finished; and the triumph over Pharaoh, and the entrance into the liberty of Canaan, were to be comparatively forgotten in the victory over sin and death, and the entrance into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Thus the Lord's supper is the passover of the Christian church. It is a sacred memorial, as that was, — "a feast of the Lord throughout all generations, an ordinance forever."

Let us recur, then, to the striking language in which Moses issues the directions for the primary observance of the festival, as it took place in the hurry of that first memorable night, and let us see what suggestions we can draw from it, that may throw light on the meaning or the duty of the substituted institution.

1. I observe, then, in the first place, that it is very obvious, from the history of the feast of the passover, that it had nothing to do with promoting the deliverance of the people. It was neither a cause nor a means of their emancipation. Not a *cause*, for that great event was evidently effected by, and is solely attributable to, the power and mercy of God. Not a *means*, because the rite was not instituted until all arrangements for that deliverance had taken place — until the very hour, almost, of its accomplishment; and, instead of assisting to accomplish it, was ordered for the simple purpose of *commemorating* its accomplishment.

The same remark holds true, and deserves to be repeated,

concerning the Christian passover. Its design is not to cause or to promote our salvation; but rather to celebrate and call up to ever-fresh and grateful remembrance what the Savior has done toward effecting it, and to assist and animate us in what is necessary for ourselves to do toward obtaining it. Salvation is not made to depend upon the observance of any positive institution. Its origin and cause are the free mercy and grace of God. Its means, stated in the most general terms, are the life, instructions, death, and mediation of Jesus Christ. It is an error to imagine that the Lord's supper is a saving ordinance. We cannot find authority for regarding it in any such light. It may aid us in cultivating and maintaining a right spirit; it may tend to excite and keep alive such a spirit; it may be a help to us in fulfilling the conditions on which, so far as our own duty is concerned, eternal life is suspended; but that it is able of itself to *procure* salvation, or that there is no salvation without it, we cannot regard as the doctrine of the New Testament; and therefore we do not believe, and would not teach.

2. I observe, secondly, that in our text the passover is considered as the *commencement of the journey of the children of Israel from the land of their bondage to a better country.* They were warned to start forward on that very night; not to wait even for the morning, and to take nothing with them that should encumber their march. The passover was to be the last and hasty supper before their flight. They were to partake of it already girded for their journey; their sandals bound upon their feet and their staves in their hands; and then, in obedience to the divine command, they were to set forth into the waste wilderness, on their long and weary pilgrimage to the promised land.

And so, my friends, in the Christian's pilgrimage through

the wilderness of the world to the Christian's better country, why should not the very first step be the Christian passover? Why should he begin his flight from the place of his bondage, without first celebrating the divine mercy that has called him upward, and strengthening himself for the trials and hazards of the way, by this solemn act of gratitude and devotion? The moment he has girded up the loins of his mind, and shod his feet with the preparation of the gospel, and taken the staff of truth in his hand, that moment, accoutred as he is, in the first glow of his faith, in the young ardor of his resolution, he should pledge himself by the holy memory of his Lord, and go on beneath the banner of his cross. He should not wait for his first love to grow cold, for the temptations and trials of life to damp his worthy zeal, and make him long to return to the forbidden delights of Egypt; but, in the first warmth of his holy purpose, forswear every sin that was dear to him, and cut every tie that bound his heart to idols, and, in the presence of the memorials of the sinless and disinterested Savior, who called him from death unto life, dedicate himself to the service of Heaven, and seal his solemn vows.

3. In the third place, the celebration of the passover is represented in our text as an *act of preparation*. It was not the finishing of their laborious enterprise, but the getting ready for it. Not a sign that they had followed God in all his leadings, and obeyed him in all his commands, and were now in sight of the promised land, ready to claim their reward — that they had fought the good fight, and kept the faith, and finished their course. Very far from this: they had not yet lifted an arm in his cause, or taken a step to his glory. Every thing was yet to be done. They were only making their preparations, and amongst these preparations,

the most remarkable was the celebration of this divinely-instituted rite.

Is there not here a lesson for Christian believers? that they should make their Christian memorial a part of their religious preparation? that they should not wait till they are already perfect, and their salvation accomplished, but make use of it at the starting-place, when they need the courage and strength it will give them. May it not be esteemed a great error in the church, sometimes attended with injurious consequences, that this wise order of things has been reversed — that Christians, instead of casting themselves on their Savior whilst young and weak, have waited to become old and strong; instead of stamping the image and seal of their Master upon their hearts whilst they were warm and yielding, have waited to try whether they would ever grów cold; and then, at last, through this very delay, have died without his seal thereon? Not so the early disciples. When the trembling jailer believed, he was straightway baptized with his household. When the Ethiopian nobleman had heard with faith the preaching of Philip, he was at once allowed to receive the sign of discipleship. And so with Cornelius and the three thousand. They were not compelled to wait. They were not *allowed* to wait to ascertain whether it were expedient, or not, — to try what the effect of time and calculation might be. But they at once bound themselves to their Master and his cause in a way calculated to fix their feelings and resolutions, however unsteadfast they might otherwise have been.

It is a serious question whether the church does not suffer from an opposite custom. Why should the participation of the Lord's supper be regarded as in itself an end, rather than as a part of the best preparation for the duties of a trying world? There are before the young Christian

arduous duties, a difficult probation, a scene of many perils, a wild of many tempters It is the part of wisdom to make large provision for safety and defence in such a journey; to be furnished with every preparation of principle, and motive, and check, which it may be possible to accumulate, and, especially, not to forego the benefit of an institution divinely provided and gifted with peculiar power.

4. Another characteristic of the language of the text is, *the spirit of resolution and determination* which it exhibits. The whole aspect of those who partake the first passover is that of men whose minds are made up to endure fatigue, danger, and suffering. They are bursting away from degradation and bondage. They are implicitly obeying the hand of Providence, which has severed their chains, and is pointing out the path of safety and duty. Behold them, as they enter this path, stopping on the threshold of their dwellings, in solemn celebration of divine goodness and devout acknowledgment of divine guidance! See them standing around the consecrated board in every house; their garments girded about them like travellers; their sandals ready bound upon their feet for the way, and their staves in their right hands; anxiously snatching a hasty meal before they issue forth upon the desert; the entire people at once about to go forward, they know not whither, nor how; but they know it is at the summons of the God of their fathers, and every eye is bright, and every heart is strong; every hand is nerved, and every step firm. They are going to weariness, to suffering, to death, it may be; but all these things move them not — it is in the way of duty, in the cause of God.

It is very true that they fell miserably short of the resolves of that hour; but still the spirit of that scene is the same with which the disciples of Jesus should celebrate

their deliverance from a worse bondage, and should issue forth on their even more important enterprise — not with a feeble purpose, a wavering faith, a chilling, trembling despondency, a faltering courage, a shrinking zeal — not with many reservations, calculations, and conditions — but with an ardent desire to attempt whatever Christian principle may require; a brave resolve to dare whatever peril Christian fidelity may impose; an unqualified determination to do whatever duty Christian truth may demand; throwing aside every weight, and the easily besetting sin, to run with patience the race set before them, well armed for combat and endurance in a waste and howling wilderness.

This temper of firmness and steadfastness is one of chief importance in a religious life. It is better than all ardent passion and clamorous zeal. These may evaporate, or grow weary, or languish for want of excitement; but the resolution of which we speak, though sometimes almost discouraged, will still persevere; though sometimes cast down, will never utterly fail; but will ever press on in the heat and burden of the day, like Gideon's soldiers in the victory, "faint, yet pursuing."

5. Equally worthy of observation, in the last place, is the *spirit of trust and hope* expressed in the text. In that hour of solemn yet hurried departure, those men had no earthly source of confidence, no earthly pillow of reliance, no earthly bulwark of defence. Poor and unarmed, with an enraged power and bloody army watching and pressing upon them, they are arrayed at midnight for an enterprise, to human calculation altogether desperate; and yet they do not quail, for they trust in the God of Jacob, and their confidence in him gives them strength. They look forward with undoubting hope to a free and better inheritance in the promised land, and this hope casts a ray of light on the dark journey

before them. Their thoughts are occupied more with the fair visions of the happy future, than with present dangers and impending trials.

This spirit also becomes those who celebrate the memorial of Jesus Christ. Heaven more than earth, the bright future rather than the gloomy present, the promised joys and promised rest rather than the pressing hardships or threatening ills, should occupy the thoughts and raise the spirits. Religious hope and religious trust should animate them to duty, and compose them in trial. We, indeed, may have richer sources of happiness in this world than the Hebrews possessed in the land of Egypt; but still they are uncertain and failing; and we, like them, are called to seek a better country — to seek it, too, in a path of arduous duties, and severe, perhaps long and numerous trials — trials in which earth cannot support or cheer us — duties for which the world cannot furnish or enliven us — in bearing and performing which God alone can animate, God alone can help us. Like the children of Israel, therefore, there is no frame of mind more suitable for us, none more needful, than that of religious trust and hope. And if suitable on account of our *wants*, O, how much more becoming on account of our *obligations!* For we not only seek, here at this table, light and strength in a difficult way stretching out far before us, but we celebrate that divine mercy which has offered us redemption; that matchless love which suffered and died to secure it for us; those labors and those sacrifices which have opened to us all our fair prospect of pardon, and peace, and life eternal. We celebrate the strong hand and out-stretched arm which have burst for us the fetters of sin and the bars of death. We celebrate the heavenly Light, which has displayed the path of immortal glory; the peace which has been as balm to our souls; the

gift of the blessed Spirit that helpeth our infirmities. Thus highly favored, thus highly blest, what obligation is more imperative, what duty more becoming, than a spirit of humble, childlike trust, and joyful, exhilarating hope? At this hour, in this scene, in the presence of these memorials, and the enjoyment of this holy festival, our hearts should always be ready to say, whatever may be our earthly lot, whatever our earthly prospects, still, "We rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, nakedness, peril, or sword? Nay, we are persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Such, my friends, are the reflections naturally suggested by our view of the text. May they help us both to the knowledge and the performance of our duty. "*Christ, our passover, has been slain for us;*" and he has instituted a memorial of his death and his love, to be kept by his disciples in all generations. Why should we not all keep it? And if we keep it, why not for the purpose and in the spirit in which it was instituted? — not as the end of our Christian probation, but as a beginning, a help, an encouragement, a security; not as the evidence that we have done, but that we are determined to do; not because we are now over the trials, and struggles, and perils of our way, but because, in the commencement of our strife, and in the heat of our warfare, and in the progress of our upward journey, we need the strength and comfort, the animation and support, which this will impart.

Let us thus observe this ordinance, and profit by it —

girded for our journey, and resolved to hasten on; firm in trust and in hope; vigorous in determination. The banner of the Lord is waving over us; and that banner is *love*. The sword of the Spirit is put into our hands for our warfare; and that sword is the word of divine *truth*. A shield we have, wherewith to quench all the fiery darts of the adversary; and that shield is *faith*. Our feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of *peace*. Our helmet is the *hope of salvation*. Hope, peace, faith, truth, love! In this beautiful and strong armor, having newly girded ourselves for the good fight and the onward march of Christian duty, let us snatch the refreshment, and press forward to victory and eternal life.

SERMON XVII.

SMALL SINS.

JAMES III. 5.

BEHOLD HOW GREAT A MATTER A LITTLE FIRE KINDLETH.

The apostle uses these words in stating the necessity of watching the tongue. As the powerful horse is governed by a slender bit, and the mighty ship is turned about by a very small helm, so, he says, does the tongue, though a small member, boast itself in doing great things. With a few words it may produce large and extensive consequences. Its small errors may lead to vast mischiefs. The slander which it whispers in the ear, not intending it shall go farther, may be proclaimed aloud upon the house-top. The evil suspicion, which was started in jest, may be circulated in earnest. The unkind reflection, which was made thoughtlessly, and with no intent to injure, may be spread abroad, increasing as it spreads, till it causes wide ruin to reputation and peace. The little lively flame of scandalous gossip, which you play with in company as a very pretty and harmless thing, may grow wild and fierce, and rage far, and become a wide-consuming conflagration. So great a matter may a little fire kindle.

What is thus true of evil speaking, is true universally. Trifles oftentimes lead to the most important consequences.

The greatest results spring from apparently slight causes. There is a principle of growth in every thing. As the spark kindles and spreads; as the acorn unfolds, and stretches itself out into a proud and lofty tree; as the drop trickles from the summit of the mountain, and, descending through the plain, swells into a mighty river; as the helpless infant enters life without reason or skill, and in a few years stands up amongst men, a leader and blessing to his race; so it is universally; so it is in regard to the characters of men. Great results spring from little causes. And he that would prevent the growth of sin, or secure the eminence of holiness, must watch the operation of small causes, and take advantage of trivial circumstances.

This is a sentiment which should be studiously impressed on our minds. It especially deserves the attention of the young, and of all who are solicitous to make attainment in virtue and religion. And this the rather, because there is such a propensity to despise small things. Little failings men will not take the trouble to correct, for they esteem them of little consequence. Little virtues they make no account of, for they seem to amount to nothing. But in truth they amount to much: they are of prime consequence; and to regard them contemptuously, as beneath our notice, is to subject ourselves to needless dangers, and fling away precious opportunities of advancement.

My object will be to present a few plain considerations, which may help us to judge correctly on this point, and especially may teach us the danger of indulging in small sins.

1. We may remark, then, first, that life is made up of little things. It is in itself a great thing, and endures for a length of years; but it consists entirely of successive moments of most unimportant length; yet, if each sepa-

rately were despised, the whole would be thrown away. So, too, in regard to the actions and events of life. How very few of them, if taken by themselves, are of great moment! Only three or four in the course of a man's existence. The rest are little daily or hourly concerns, which singly appear to merit small regard; but all taken together constitute the character and substance of life.

Hence it happens that we rarely have the opportunity of exercising virtue or avoiding vice on a large scale. Our path does not lie among important affairs and great occasions. And if we think it of consequence to watch and act only on great occasions, we shall inevitably pass the chief portion of our time without doing any thing to keep or form a virtuous character. But character depends on the habitual tenor of sentiment and action, not on occasional efforts. A man is what he is always, not what he is sometimes. He may summon strength to resist a strong temptation, on some extraordinary occasion, and yet in reality be a slave to lust. He may have resolution in some pressing or splendid emergency, to do a striking act of beneficence, and yet in ordinary cases may be parsimonious and illiberal. And in all these instances he is to be judged by the *small things* he does *constantly*, and not by the *showy things* he does *sometimes*.

2. It is to be remarked, in the next place, that there is a close connection between events. One leads to another, and no one stands alone. If slight failings could exist by themselves, without producing any results or affecting other parts of the character, it would be less necessary to make a severe account of them. But it is not so. The events of life are so many links of a chain; one draws on another, and that another, in indefinite succession. Every vice is one of a family: give admittance to the parent, and it will

introduce the children; allow the intrusion of the offspring, and they will bring with them their companions, and we cannot tell where the troop of intruders will end. This process may be illustrated by the image under which the poet pictures the progress of self-love

> "Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
> As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
> The centre moved, a circle straight succeeds;
> Another still, and still another spreads;
> Friend, parent, neighbor, first it will embrace,
> His country next, and next all human race."

This description, which, in the case of self-love, is not more than half true, represents very exactly the course of a small sin. It is but a little *pebble*, and yet it extends its influence, circle after circle, far beyond its own presence, you cannot tell how far nor how long.

We therefore must guard against the commission of small faults, because we do not know where their consequences will end, either as respects ourselves or as respects others. Take, for example, the thoughtless use of the tongue, mentioned in the text. You indulge in a gay raillery of wit, or a sportive gossipping about your neighbor's affairs and character. O, you mean nothing by it, you say; it is but in sport. But the CONSEQUENCE may be, that you fix on him an ill name, or an opprobrious suspicion; the story that you have set in motion spreads in wider and wider circles, gathering as it goes, and proves his ruin. How many have in this way lighted a fire which they could not quench! Or consider the small fault of thoughtlessness. "Why," says the thoughtless man, "one would suppose, by the manner in which you blame me, that I had committed some great crime — murder, or theft, or blasphemy, at least, and yet it was nothing but thoughtlessness!" Nothing but thoughtless-

ness! But, prithee, what are the *consequences* of thoughtlessness? What are they likely to be, but a general neglect of duty? He that thinks it excusable to neglect one duty because he did not think of it, may find the same apology for neglect of another; and then, by and by, there is no security that he will be thoughtful of any engagement or duty. Thoughtlessness grows upon one. If he deem it excusable at the age of fifteen, it may be his master at forty, so that he can be depended on for punctuality and fidelity in no case whatever. And then he may find, that, through breaking this "least commandment," he has become "least in the kingdom of heaven."

3. Small faults are to be avoided, because we are so much the creatures of habit. Every man knows how strong is the chain of habit, and how difficult it is to break it or escape from it; so much so, that the prophet has said, that, for one accustomed to do evil to learn to do well, is as difficult as for an Ethiopian to change his skin or a leopard his spots. And how are habits formed? By the repetition of single and small actions — bad habits by the repetition of single and small faults: — these, collected together, just as drops form the ocean, constitute a mass of iniquity, which is as heinous and ruinous as a great crime, and would be perceived to be so, if they could all meet the mind at once. There was a cruel punishment once used, in which the criminal was put to death by the slow falling of successive drops of water on his naked head. Each drop of itself was a trifle; but they destroyed life at last as surely as the fatal blow of a heavy battle-axe. So each separate fault may be a trifle; but their continued succession will prove as ruinous to the soul as the commission of any capital enormity.

Take the sin of peevishness, for example. "No great

crime," you say, "to fret at disappointment, or vexation, or accident; who can help fretting? and what harm can it do?" But suppose that it become a *habit* with you — that you fret always, and at every thing — so that, day after day and year after year, your ordinary accent is ill-natured and fault-finding, and your wearied family and harassed household drag on a comfortless existence at the mercy of your temper, which neither knows nor allows peace. What say you then? Is it a small fault? Is this destruction of their happiness whom God sent you to render happy, — is this any thing less than a *great* sin? If you had put slow poison into their daily bread, so that their lives should be sapped by inches, and wasted by a lingering death of twenty years, — if you had defrauded them of their estate, so that they should live on in toil and beggary, — you would esteem yourself guilty of high crimes, and men would give them the fearful names of dishonesty and manslaughter. And how is it a less sin to fill their lives with misery than with disease? to rob them of their happiness, than to rob them of their gold?

4. Small faults are to be avoided, because they are acts of disobedience to God, and, so far as this constitutes sin, are as sinful as greater transgressions. This is a very solemn consideration, and ought to be distinctly weighed. The considerations, which determine the degree of sin in any action, are many and various. The circumstances under which it was done, the opportunities of knowledge enjoyed by the person doing it, the strength of the temptation, the degree of resistance, the consequences which may follow, — all these, and many things like them, are to be taken into account in judging of the magnitude of a sin. *The authority of God* is always one of these circumstances, and a most important one. And however a sin may be

large or small in other respects, in this particular it is always the same; that is, when the authority of God is known. The apostle James says, "He that keeps the whole law, and offends in one point, is guilty of all." Why? Because he offends against the authority which ordained the whole, and which is just as much defied by the breach of one command as by the breach of all; and he thus evinces a disregard to that authority, which would lead him, under tempting circumstances, to break the other commands, as he broke this. We may apply this principle to the present case. He that offends in small things incurs the same guilt, so far as the law is concerned, as if he offended in large things; because he disregards that authority which equally requires the whole, and thus shows that he only needs sufficient inducement, and he will break the greater as well as the less. It is not the authority on which the law stands which restrains him. You will not lie, nor steal, nor defraud, nor perjure yourself; because these things are against the divine law. But it is equally against the divine law to live for selfish gratification only, to be unkind in the common relations of life, to omit the duties of usefulness and prayer. Why not, then, refrain from these? Is it any excuse for disobedience that you count them small things? Will the recording angel refuse to give them in against you? If they are not too small to be commanded, they are not too small to be done.

We must act from PRINCIPLE; and true principle is thorough and consistent. It knows no difference in point of obligation between one and another of God's commandments. It thinks no sin allowable which displeases him. It does not inquire whether an action be little or large, but whether it be wrong; not whether God will be little or much displeased, but whether he will be displeased at all.

It does not seek to discover how many sinful indulgences it may possibly do to retain, but how many it is absolutely necessary to put aside.

5. By indulgence in small sins we injure religion in the opinion of other men. This is an important consideration for those who have at heart the honor of their faith. Let them consider it deeply. In no sense does a man live for himself alone. In no respect can he limit the influence of his conduct to his own person or his own happiness. Why is he to do right? Not barely that he may obtain a reward and save his soul, but for the sake of those around him, that he may promote their happiness and improvement. Why, too, must he avoid all sin, and strive for all righteousness? Not barely that he may obtain a reward, and save his own soul; but that he may do service to others; that he may honor his religion, may exhibit a specimen of its operation, may render it amiable in the eyes of the world, and win other souls to its dominion. But this cannot be done by him who thinks small sins allowable. "Allowable!" exclaim the men of the world; "why, even WE are ashamed of *great* sins; honor, fashion, reputation, interest, keep US from heinous crimes; we allow the indulgence only of the smaller sins; and what does your religion do more? It is idle to boast of the superiority of your faith, if it will carry you no farther than this." What shall be answered to this sneer of the worldling? What reply can be made to it by the man who esteems only the grosser transgressions to be matters of reproach? Any body can behave well on great occasions, and abstain from enormities when his character is at stake. The Christian must go farther. "For how can we expect people to believe that we are in earnest on great points, when they see that we cannot withstand a trivial temptation, against which resistance would have been

comparatively easy? What if our general character be respectable? Yet, if a near acquaintance disclose the same failings, littlenesses, and bad tempers, which are found in the most ordinary persons, how deeply is religion dishonored in their eyes!" *

6. There is one further reflection which should call to an earnest application of this subject; and that is, *the fact* that a good character is always acquired and always lost by little things. It is not built up in an hour; it cannot be thrown down by a blow. It rises, like the vast buildings of ancient architecture, stone by stone, by gradual, patient, unintermitting toil. It decays slowly, like them, when falling by the tardy tooth of time, snapped and undermined while you are unconscious of the operation. It requires, therefore, that you keep your eye upon it, and be diligent to maintain it in repair; not that you fold your arms, and say, at the first symptom of decay, "It is a little thing; let it alone." But all the ruins that time has ever made were by littles. All the ruins that sin has ever made were by littles. No one becomes suddenly corrupt, or is at once abandoned. It is a little step which begins the downward course, some slight indulgence, some unimportant omission, which gives him a taste for sin, and renders the next transgression easy. This may be illustrated in a thousand instances. It is verified in the intemperate man: no man ever became a drunkard but by the repetition of *small faults;* and now behold how great a matter the little fire has kindled! It is verified in the idle man: a *little* more sleep, a *little* more slumber; and what next? "So shall poverty come on thee like a swift traveller, and want like an armed man." It is verified in the backslider, who once was a religious man; who once enjoyed the faith and peace of the Christian promises; who once knew the hap-

* H. More.

piness of communion with God, and relished the glorious truths of a spiritual life. Look at a man in such a state, and say, where lies his danger? His mind is settled, his principles are fixed. Tempt him directly and openly to desert his religion, and he would laugh you to scorn; he would sooner think of death than apostasy; and if he falls away, it is by imperceptible gradations, by trifling indulgences, by occasional carelessnesses; first, perhaps, by omitting or slighting some small duty; then by allowing himself in some small sin. This lowers the religious tone of his mind, and then another step is easy. The first symptom, perhaps, is thoughtlessness in prayer. Instead of correcting it, he passes it by as a slight matter, and therefore it increases. Then he omits the duty once; *once* is of no great consequence; and so he goes on, once more, and once more, till the omission becomes frequent, and ends in indevotion. We need not follow his decline; it is evident how easily he passes downward to indifference and irreligion. How truly, according to the wise man's words, *he that despiseth small things shall perish by little and little!*

In conclusion, let us not suffer these suggestions to die on the ear, but let us make a practical use of them. To neglect the improvement of *one* sermon, to slight the opportunity of *one* Sabbath, may seem to be a small thing. But let us apply the doctrine of the discourse to the discourse itself, by immediately adopting its instructions; *and who can tell how great a matter this little fire may kindle!* Let us faithfully apply it, and we may look for vast results. Let us keep an eye to every moment and every action, and we shall find a high attainment in virtue and religion to be the final consequence. And surely — if the avaricious man, by attention to small gains and insignificant savings, will painfully collect together heaps of treasure till he dies

in possession of immense wealth; if the ambitious scholar, by the frugal use of moments, and by resolutely employing the little fragments of time which other men throw away, will make himself a prodigy of learning, — then surely we should be deeply ashamed if we are not willing to endure the same carefulness and toil, in pursuing a treasure greater than all earthly wealth, and a distinction beyond all earthly ambition. *They* do it for an earthly reward; we should be willing to do it for a heavenly. They do it to gratify their passions and their taste, and they cannot succeed without it. Neither can the Christian succeed without it; and therefore we should be ready to devote ourselves to it, that we may please God and find acceptance at last. Let it not be said, that all self-denying industry, all true calculating wisdom, is employed in the business of the world, and for worldly ends; but let us bring the same wisdom, the same industry, into our religious engagements.

SERMON XVIII

CHRISTIAN CONSOLATIONS.

PSALM CVIII. 12.

GIVE US HELP FROM TROUBLE, FOR VAIN IS THE HELP OF MAN.

"MAN is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." It belongs to his nature, it attends his condition from the cradle to the grave. It is not his uniform lot, it does not form the law and complexion of his being. Far from it. His lot is good, his heritage is pleasant. The world is bright before him, and his path strewed with blessings. It is wrong to talk of this as a dark world, as if we were always under a cloud, and the light of enjoyment were rare and scattered. The true image of life is that of a pleasant day, when nature is bright and all things cheerful, but which is liable at any moment to be overcast with clouds, interrupted by tempests, and closed in distress.

The longer one lives in the world, and has experience of the various allotments of Providence, the more sensible is he of the truth of this remark. Here and there, indeed, we find a man whose lot has been signally dark, or whose temper is gloomy, who can see nothing cheerful or desirable on earth. He speaks of life as one long evil, and earth as no better than a tedious prison. Here and there, too, we find a man wonderfully favored in health, spirits, and prosperity, to whom life is joyous, without change, and

earth a paradise, without thorn or cloud. But these all are rare instances. The majority of men, as they pass along, year after year, are partakers of vicissitudes which teach them more truly that life is a scene of mingled good and evil; and as time cools the vivacity of youthful hope on the one hand, and soothes the severity of disappointed expectations on the other, they learn that the texture and general habit of existence is happy, but that evil is always nigh; that blessing outweighs calamity — yet that calamity is never far off. Hence, if religiously disposed, there grows up within them that salutary mixture of cheerful enjoyment and watchful sobriety, which constitutes the equanimity of the Christian temper — that perpetual gratitude for a Father's smile, and that perpetual submission to a Father's chastening, which make up the quiet beauty of filial trust.

Of the troubles, however, which interrupt the course of life, which break in on our plans, which darken our dwellings, which change the present aspect of the world, it has been kindly appointed that there shall be many alleviations. For every disease there is a remedy; for every wound there is a balm; for every sorrow a consolation. Some of these are to be found in our very make and constitution, which God has so curiously fitted to accommodate itself to circumstances and situation. Some are found in the soothing power of *time*, which quiets the grief it cannot remedy; some in the sympathy and benevolence of friends, whom the common Father has placed around us as the representatives of his own love, to help in bearing the burdens of existence, and to strengthen our spirit, under the weight of evil. In these, and other alleviations provided for human misery in the original constitution of things and order of our social relations, how visible the care of a kind Parent, watchful for the well-being of his

offspring! — especially watchful in that he never leaves us alone, but through their hands administers to us the needed aid, so that our thankful thoughts often find utterance in the words of the poet, —

> "Thy bounteous hand with worldly bliss
> Hath made my cup run o'er,
> And in a kind and faithful friend
> Hath doubled all my store."

But there are some trials which the constitution of nature, the balm of time, and the sympathy of men, cannot reach. There are some depths of grief, to which no voice of friendship, no eloquence of human consolation, can penetrate. The language of condolence is but an empty sound, which enters in at the ear, but dies away, cold and unmeaning, whilst the mourner wishes that his comforters would sit down by him, like the friends of Job on their first arrival, and hold their peace, even from good. For this severity of affliction there is but one spring open of effectual peace. It is that which David sought, when he cried out in our text, "Give *thou* me help from trouble, for vain is the help of man." He had known what it was to have all the sources of earthly delight dried away; desertion, bereavement, and desolation, had in all forms come upon him, and he turned from pleasure, from wealth, from friends, even — they could do nothing to relieve him; miserable comforters were they all — to the full and sufficient strength of the God of hosts.

The great truth to which David thus testified in his life, and which he uttered in our text, is still a great and universal truth, under the more illustrious light of the gospel. There is no sufficient source of consolation for man except in religion. True help, in time of trial, comes from God.

How beautifully is this declared by the prophet, "Thou

wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee"! How strikingly by another prophet, "Though all temporal evil overwhelm me, still will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation"! How was it verified to the worthies of the ancient covenant, Abraham, Job, and Daniel, and to the messengers of the new, when, in dungeons and prisons, they could sing praises to God, and cry out trustingly, "We are persuaded that none of these things can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"! How was it verified in the history of our blessed Lord himself, the Captain of our salvation, who "was made perfect through suffering; who, when, with strong cries and tears, he had offered himself to God, was heard in that he feared," and was strengthened by an angel, and by more than an angel's peace, for the dreadful hour that could not pass from him!

All the teaching, therefore, and all the experience of holy men, and of the blessed Redeemer, persuade us that our true help in trial must come from God.

And how is it to come from God?

1. It comes through *faith*. The heart which believes in God, and believes in Christ, ceases to be troubled; for it does not look at the event alone, but at the hidden purposes which it is to answer in the counsels of Providence, and the revelations concerning these purposes which have been brought by Jesus Christ. Thus the mind is occupied by something extrinsic to the immediate cause of mourning, and lifted up to the great First Cause. In contemplating that great First Cause, it is impossible to discern any thing but infinite wisdom and essential benignity. Whatever is done, is with the kindest design, and for the most desirable end. It is impossible there should be in it error or ill-will; but the most mysterious dealings, to the watch-

ful eye of faith, which knows how to interpret them, have a light and a meaning, which give tranquillity to the disturbed spirit. It is *distrust* which is unsettled, perplexed, distressed; it is distrust which sits down repining, and beats the breast, and refuses to be comforted. Faith rises, and lifts up its head; there may be a tear in its eye, but there is steadfastness in its heart, and with unconquerable serenity it gazes upward, till, piercing the clouds and darkness which surround the eternal throne, it discerns the righteousness and mercy which are its foundation. It does not doubt that all is right, for it relies on divine wisdom. It does not doubt that all will be well, for it confides in perfect love; and, taking up the words of the apostle, it says, "We have had fathers of the flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" and "if he spared not his own Son, shall he not with him freely give us all things?"

Thus does God send down help through faith.

In the next place, he adds to it through *prayer*. Prayer is the act of faith. The confiding child that has stood gazing upward to a parent's seat, contemplating and adoring, at length opens his mouth and speaks. The fire kindles within, and his glowing thoughts utter themselves unto God. Thus it was with Jesus, when he rejoiced in spirit at the success of his ministry, and cried, "Father, I thank thee;" when he groaned in spirit at the tomb of Lazarus, and cried, "Father, I thank thee;" when he drew near to the agony of death, and exclaimed, "Father, glorify thy name." And so, too, his friends, who walk in his faith, at every changing season of their pilgrimage, call upon God. It is the natural and dutiful expression of their filial trust. It augments and gives vigor to that trust.

The sluggish heart is roused, the wavering fortitude is confirmed, when the believer goes aside from the pressure of these mortal things, like his Lord retiring to the mountain, and holds communion with God. He returns a revived and strengthened man. He is nerved to do and to endure. God is the foundation of all power. If the human soul would have strength, it must draw from him. It thrives by the breath of his presence. It grows fit for action and for suffering, by pouring out to him its own weakness, and drinking in, in return, his strength.

To speak more plainly, prayer, by its own action on the mind, imparts to it strength; and it has, moreover, the promise of additional aid from the Spirit of God. He who trusts his own resources is weak, and soon faints under the pressure of trial; "but they that wait on the Lord renew their strength." He that seeks to brave out the grief, and harden himself against it with stoical fortitude, may break his heart in the attempt; or, if he succeed, it is at the expense of all that is generous and amiable in his nature, and he becomes less than a man. But he who, feeling his calamity, pours out his feelings in prayer to the Father, by thus mingling his keen sorrow with his holiest devotions, soothes his sorrow into tranquillity; it becomes a part of his spiritual pleasure; it is the means of lifting him into a frame of thought superior to this lower scene. A serenity, of which the world knows nothing and can impart nothing, attends the act; and his cry for peace, even while he utters it, is answered by Him who has said, "Let him call upon me in trouble; I will deliver him, and he shall glorify me."

Once more. God sends help through the Christian *hope* which he has given. The apostle said of the heathens, that they were *without God, and without hope* in the world:

their misery consisted not only in ignorance of God, but in the prospect of eternal death. But to the Christian, not only the Father is revealed, but life and immortality are brought to light; so that, whatever evils may assail him in the world, they not only cease at the grave, but there is more than a compensation for them beyond it. Whatever afflictions weigh down his spirit here, they are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed.

This inward hope completes the measure of the Christian's consolation. *Faith and prayer* had given quiet to his mind, but the *hope of heaven* excites it to joy, and raises it from serenity to rapture. He feels himself to be immortal. He knows his virtuous friends to be so too, and therefore feels that he is not separated from them. When he stands weeping, like Mary at the sepulchre of her Lord, he hears a voice which says, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? They are not here, they are risen. For as Jesus died and rose again, even so also those who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him."

There is no trial or burden to which he may not rise superior, whose mind is inspired and filled by the glorious operations of this exalted hope. He feels himself immortal. His affections being set on his eternal good, temporal evil has lost its power to destroy his happiness. It may be that his worldly possessions have failed him, and his earthly prospects are darkened; but the possessions on which he depends for happiness are secure, his favorable prospects cannot be overshadowed. Infirmity and disease may render life weary; but his thoughts are not confined to life; they wander through eternity, they commune with God, their home is in heaven. Death may approach while in the midst of prosperity, having a thousand dear ties; it may be in the very opening of life's happy day, with every thing

that earth and friendship can give, to make life delightful and desirable. But even then, the heart that has learned to exalt itself by the visions of futurity, is able to disarm the king of terrors. The hope of Christ is mightier than the fear of the grave. At that hour of nature's faltering, when dread and consternation have appalled even the bold, we have seen even a young, frail, feminine spirit, for which the *common* adversities of life seemed too rude, able to look round without dismay, collected, calm, serene, smiling amid pain, and the conqueror of the grave. Others tremble and weep; but the sufferer, as if no longer a sufferer, can speak quietly, and comfort them; can lead them to God, in words of trust and consolation, and so sink into that dreaded silence of the grave, as if it were indeed but passing to its home. Such power has God given to man to triumph over death! So kindly has he provided strength for the soul that puts its trust in his gospel.

It is in vain to deny that life has its troubles, and death its alarms. We cannot disguise the bitterness of the cup which man is called to drink. Nor can we help the cry, that, if it be possible, that cup may pass from us. But God has done better for us than to cause it to pass. He has made it the cup of immortality. Trial and grief are the preparation for glory. The grave is the gate of heaven. The death of the body is the emancipation of the soul. Emancipated souls are to reunite in a better and happier society. The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there can no evil touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seem to die, and their departure is taken for misery; but they are at peace; for God has loved them, and received them to himself, and they shall rejoice forever. And if ever a holy hallelujah of solemn praise should ascend from man to God, it might well be at the departure of one

who had died in the triumph of Christian hope, and the burial of whose body is but the signal of the spirit's welcome by angels into heaven. Tears might fall as we sang, but not the less real would be our praise, and not the less perfect our consolation.

These are the consolations of religion. Through these does God send help in trouble. *Faith, prayer, hope,* — these three, and the greatest of these is, — I do not know which is the greatest; they form the threefold cord which cannot be broken. Faith could do little if it were not expressed in prayer and answered by hope. Prayer without faith is but an idle breath of wind, and without hope is only the groaning of despondency. Hope has no anchor, if faith have not supplied one, and no wings, if she borrow none from devotion. Separately, they are as the lungs without the heart, or the heart without the blood; without the others, each is weak and inefficient; but together, they make up the living, vivifying system; they *create* peace where death has destroyed it; they let in the tranquil light of heaven on the soul, upon which earth and the grave have cast down darkness that may be felt.

My dear brethren, do not some of you *know* this to be true? Have you not, in your own experience, witnessed and tested this sufficiency of Christian faith, which communes with God, and is bright with immortal hope — to subdue and calm, and enable you to triumph over bereavement and fear? And can you not join me in urging upon all a deep acquaintance with those great principles of truth which can work so delightful an operation, and of which every one, at some day, must stand in need? Brethren, the day of adversity, in some form, is preparing for you all; the day when you will feel that vain is the help of man, and will instinctively cry out for help from on high. That help

will not come by miraculous intervention. It will come, if at all, through the *faith, prayer, and hope*, of Jesus Christ. And these can avail only as they are familiar to the mind. Therefore it behoves you to cultivate them now. If you would not be overwhelmed, if you would not be desolate and helpless, if you would have peace for a wounded spirit, cultivate them now. Then shall you know what are the visitations of God to the soul of his loving child; then shall you see the glory of the gospel, and anticipate the joy of heaven.

SERMON XIX.

THE PRINCIPLES THAT SHOULD GOVERN A YOUNG MAN IN THE CHOICE OF A PROFESSION.*

ACTS IX. 6.

AND HE, TREMBLING AND ASTONISHED, SAID, LORD, WHAT WOULDST THOU HAVE ME TO DO?

THIS is written concerning Paul, at the first moment when he was convinced, by the appearance of Jesus Christ himself, that he had been in an error. He saw that he must begin at once a new course; that the new relations in which he now stood brought with them new duties; and his first inquiry was, what they were.

It must be the first inquiry of every conscientious man, in every state and all the progress of his existence; especially at every change in his state, at every marked stage in his progress. Whenever, like Paul, a new path is opening before him, — when entering on new relations, assuming new responsibilities, it is the first inquiry, *What have I now to do?* It should always assume the form of religious inquiry — "*Lord, what wilt* THOU have me to do?"

One of the seasons which demand this inquiry is that at which youth is passing into manhood, and assuming the

* Preached in the College Chapel on the last Sunday of the academic year.

new relations of mature life among men. It may not imply any such *change* as was required of the apostle; it may demand only adherence to the principles and the course already adopted. But though they be unchanged, they are to be exercised in a new sphere, and under novel modes of application; and this can be safely done only by studiously inquiring, under a deep sense of responsibility to God, what it is that this new position demands.

The subject thus suggested is peculiarly applicable to this audience and this day. This congregation is composed, in large part, of those who are standing precisely at this point in their existence — on the edge of manhood, and with a necessity of soon deciding on the principles and plan upon which their manhood shall be conducted. A considerable number of those before me, now worship with us for the last time, and listen to the last religious counsels from the place of their education. Can these counsels be better directed than in aiding them, as they step out into active life, to answer this great inquiry wisely — helping them to lay out their plans and choose their future pursuits hereafter on right principles — helping them to perceive what the Lord would have them to do?

We familiarly say, that the law of right should be the rule of a man's life. His principles, motives, affections, habits, must be agreeable to the will of God, and such as will avail him in the future world, as well as in this.

This is a familiar, constantly-repeated doctrine; slighted by us in our conduct, but admitted by our sober judgments. We never deny it in theory, however much we disregard it in practice. Why is it so much slighted in our conduct? why disregarded in our practice?

Because we allow ourselves to be acted upon and controlled more by the circumstances without us, than by the

principle within us; because we permit ourselves to be drifted along by the current of the world, instead of obeying the rule of our own minds; because we yield our convictions and feelings to the influences about us, instead of compelling them to yield to our convictions and feelings. How true is this! How almost wholly is the character of most men the result of the circumstances in which they live! how do they vary with the change of circumstances! and what different men would they have been, had they been thrown into different connections, occupations, and pursuits! They know what is right, and they approve it, they honor it; but they follow the wrong, because it requires less effort to yield to the pressure of external circumstances than to obey the gentle impulse of the mind within.

Hence it is of importance that one should, as far as possible, place himself under circumstances favorable to character — circumstances whose influences shall *coincide* with and *aid* his own better judgment and virtuous desire. On starting in life, when he is deliberating where he shall place himself, and in what pursuits he shall spend his life, this should be with him the decisive consideration. The situation he shall then assume, the relations upon which he shall then enter, the avocations in which he shall thenceforward engage, must affect more or less his character; and his decision in regard to them is, in fact, a decision in favor of what shall promote, or of what shall retard, the growth of his virtues and the salvation of his soul.

The choice of a pursuit in life is, therefore, a matter of momentous concern. Not only the welfare of life, but the character of the man, essentially depends upon it. By the majority of this congregation, that choice is yet to be made; they are yet to decide how they shall occupy themselves in the world. If they would make the right choice,

or ever arrive at a *wise* decision, it can only be by adopting the true principles of judgment. It is of consequence, then, to them, *to know these principles*, and to consider early their application. This is the subject to which I now invite your attention, and which I wish to treat in such a manner that every man may learn from it his own duty.

It naturally divides itself into two parts : 1. The considerations by which a man should be governed in the choice of a profession. 2. Their application to educated men.

I. The consideration which undoubtedly stands at the head of the list is that of the *necessity of obtaining the means of subsistence.* Existence itself is first of all to be provided for — the indispensable pre-requisite to all duties and enjoyments. It is vain to consult for other things till this has been made sure — so much so, that if it were possible for all other reasons and obligations to point decidedly to a given course, and yet, by that course, one should be unable to earn his bread, this single consideration would overbalance all the rest, — simply, because without this every thing else would be impossible — would have no being. Man must live.

So much is clear; and there is more of romance than of virtue in those who pretend that the means of living are to be despised, provided only that one does what he thinks his duty. But then, on the other hand, this consideration, binding as it is, is far more likely to be abused than neglected. Instead of urging it on the attention, it is necessary to prevent its being attended to too much. What is to be understood by this livelihood, which is first of all to be secured ? Doubtless something more than the bare supply of the absolute bodily wants. This is extremely little, and in a civilized community would be taking a step backward toward barbarism. No man, where the arts and

comforts of life have advanced as they have among Christian nations, can be truly said to have earned a *livelihood*, who is not able to live in the manner of those with whom he is to associate; so that the satisfaction of intercourse and friendship shall not be hindered by the petty annoyances of petty distinctions in modes and appearances. But beyond this there is no need to go. Can we say it is right to go? Yet how many are guilty of this wrong! They will not be content with competence; they must have abundance and luxury. They are dissatisfied with comfort; they must have splendor. They look for some place which will insure them opulent possessions. Their visions are of large estates, sumptuous living, and the artificial consideration and indolent indulgence which appertain to affluence. All this is wrong. All this makes no part of the considerations by which one is to be influenced. It is false — mischievous — corrupting. He that allows himself to be governed by it puts himself in the way of becoming selfish, grasping, worldly; risks his simplicity, puts in jeopardy his moral principles and habits, and runs into "many hurtful and deceitful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

In answering the question, "What is to be considered a *living?*" men immediately separate a thousand different ways, according to their previous habits of life, the society in which they have lived, their notions of worldly prosperity, their love of self-gratification, their ambition, and the numberless other things which go to make a man's idea of happiness. If men would cease to take counsel of these, — if they could calmly look with the eye of sober reason on life and its purposes, on the earth and its means of gratification, — it would be less difficult to decide this matter, and there would be less clashing than there is between this first

obligation to make a worldly provision, and the subsequent obligations of a higher nature.

Here, then, it is of importance that one study the true view of things, and do not allow himself to be deceived by the false maxims and artificial associations of the world. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." The things essential to existence are extremely few, and easily procured: those essential to render that existence *happy* are very few more, provided one be self-governed and moderate; and a wise man will regard nothing beyond these, when he anticipates his calling in the world. He who accounts it necessary, or most desirable, to become rich, who connects his ideas of happiness and honor with large possessions and the artificial consideration which is attached to wealth, errs in his first purpose, goes astray in the very first step, and multiplies the hazards of disappointment and chagrin. Yet perhaps there is no error more common — not the extravagant error of aiming at *great wealth*, as the object for which to live — but the error of so setting one's desires on a *more than competence;* of so looking with contempt on the prospect of a merely comfortable existence, that the taste for simple and natural pleasure is lost, and the higher motives, of virtue, usefulness, and truth, lose their comparative estimation. Hence uneasy desires, restless discontent, dissatisfaction, repining and envy at the more successful; hence, in a word, *wretchedness*, in a condition where a well-ordered mind could be full of gratitude. In a commercial community, like that in which we live, which is rushing onward in a tide of prosperity that astonishes while we gaze, and infatuates the mind of those who are engaged in the commotion, — in such a community, especially, there is danger that the judgment be perverted; that the humbler but useful call-

ings become distasteful, and multitudes of young men, to the peril of their innocence, at the risk of corruption and wretchedness, press into the crowded ranks of Mammon, and suffer themselves to forget there is any good but gold. It has been said by one who has long watched the commercial world in this country, that only one in seven of those who enter this walk succeed in it; that six in every seven fail — a dreadful proportion of blanks, considering the quantity of blasted hopes and blighted integrity, of broken hearts and ruined characters, which it involves. And, yet, into this desperate struggle how eagerly are our young men rushing! With six chances of ruin to one of success, how many are leaving the less crowded, the more certain, the more quiet avocations of professional life, for which their higher education had fitted them — and in which competence, with cultivated minds and useful occupations, would be far happier in the long run, and far more honorable, than this ambition to grow rich in business — whilst letters are forgotten, philosophy is deserted, the acquisitions of intellect are thrown away, and the mind, that might have illumined society by its genius, confines its noble powers to the pitiful drudgery of barter, and the miserable cares of gain.

Let one beware, then, of being misled by assigning too large a place in his thoughts to this preliminary consideration of a livelihood. Let it not be greatest as well as first. It should be least. It is a necessary, not a high, moral, noble consideration. As little regard as possible must be allowed to it, in order that more may be allowed to others of a higher and more generous character.

2. The next consideration, by which one is to be guided, is a regard to the capacity which God has given him. In providing for so various a world as this, the Creator has por-

tioned out to its inhabitants a great variety of endowments, indicating to each the place he ought to fill, and the work he is to do, by the quality of those gifts. In this manner, preparation is made for adequately filling every situation and post of society, from the highest to the lowest; and no man can decide truly what is his post, if he do not observe these indications in his nature. He may, with preposterous ambition, thrust himself into a calling for which he is wholly unfit, to the detriment of the public weal and his own final shame; or he may, through a false humility or criminal indolence, hold back from important labors which he was created to discharge. He must inquire, therefore, and learn at the outset, for what he is fitted. He must coolly survey his faculties, his dispositions, his tendencies, his tastes; and select his avocation accordingly. In the majority of cases, it is perhaps true, that no original bent of the mind indicates decisively the pursuit to be chosen. A determinate preappointment of genius, such as compels a Newton, a Handel, a Raffaelle, to their several spheres, is almost as rare as such eminence. Yet, in a less degree, something of the same sort exists — enough to decide the balance between a life of letters and a life of action — between the career of an artist and that of a drudge. And if this were duly attended to, we should have less frequent cause to lament that the privileges of an accomplished education are thrown away upon incorrigible dunces, while nature's Miltons and Ciceros are crowded down to inglorious obscurity. We should see fewer minds wandering from their spheres. We should see each shining with all its light in its own place, and the world blessed with a more natural and thorough illumination.

3. But since, as I said, in many cases the natural determination is not strong, it becomes necessary to help one's

decision by a regard, in the next place, *to the attainments to which education has led him.* The original differences of nature are modified by processes of education; powers are developed and strengthened; and one may have been adapted, by this process, to situations or employments for which he had no natural adaptedness. Perhaps men are fitted for their peculiar line of life more by acquired than by natural talent. If one have been denied the advantages of extensive instruction, and arrive at manhood ignorant and unfurnished, it were vain to ask whether nature had not intended him for a statesman. He must be content with the place to which his actual qualifications entitle him. And if he have received the blessing of high culture and an accomplished scholarship, no matter if he find his disposition turning rather to a walk which shall occupy only the hands, — he is no longer at liberty to go into it; his duties to society demand that he serve it in a higher sphere, and his responsibility to his God does not permit him to shrink from it.

4. For there are two further considerations to be weighed — his duty to men and his responsibility to God; *men*, with whom he is to live; *God*, to whom he is to render account. No man liveth to himself; no man has a right to consult his own well-being alone, or to live from a regard solely to his own happiness, improvement, dignity, or distinction. He is implicated with others, and just as much made for others as for himself. Nature teaches this by the position in which she has placed him; and revelation teaches it, when it places on precisely the same footing of obligation love to self and love to the neighbor. It is thus, and thus only, that the true well-being of the whole is provided for. Doubtless there is truth in the frequent saying, that, if every one would but take care of himself, all would be taken care

of; but he who infers from this his right only to care for himself, to the neglect of others, acts upon a principle which is perfectly atrocious. There is precisely the same proof that God intended us to act with reference to the well-being of others, as to our own well-being; the same proof that man was made to be useful, as that he was made to be happy — indeed, one proof stronger, since usefulness is a sure preliminary to happiness, but happiness does not so surely lead to usefulness. When one asks, therefore, "What shall be my calling in life?" the reply is, it must be a useful one. Select for yourself one in which you can do good. You have no right to be a drone in the busy republic. You have no right to consult your own comfort, ease, pleasure. Usefulness is a prior and superior obligation. Your fellow-men have all an equal claim on you. You have a duty to them. If, of two open paths, one leading to useful action, and the other to personal gratification, you choose the latter, you are guilty of a selfish meanness; and if, like some, you choose the latter, knowing that, while it secures you wealth, consideration, enjoyment to yourself, it imposes poverty, ruin, and shame upon others, there are no words severe enough to describe the guilt you incur and the condemnation you deserve. Guilt and condemnation! — not only because the welfare of your brother is concerned in what you do, but because, as I said, you are to give account to God. These talents, these opportunities, these means of advancing his world, of blessing his children, of aiding his providence in dispensing virtue and happiness, — these are all trusts from him, to be called for at the end of life; to be returned to Him who gave them. What a solemn thought! and how should it weigh on the minds of those who are consulting how they shall occupy themselves in this lifetime! Let them go forward, in imagination, a few years,

and picture to themselves the day when this life shall be over, and they called on to give account of it at the bar of God. Let them remember the inquiry that will be put to them. Let them realize the answers they shall then desire to give — not *this*, surely not this — "Lord, we bring back the rich gifts thou didst bestow. We have used them for purposes of luxury and display. We have lived in plenty and pleasure. We have taken care to make the most of every hour for sensual enjoyment, and we have left our fellow-men to do the same. Let them tell what has been their lot!" There are multitudes — O brethren, what multitudes! — that have gone up to the judgment-seat with this dreadful tale of life upon their lips, with no brighter summary of their days than this deplorable story of their perversion! Let those that are beginning life ponder this thought; and ere they frame their plan, ere they enter on their path, let them deeply feel that for all these things God will bring them into judgment. Let the profound sense of responsibility to him be inwoven with their whole being, and every purpose and desire of life.

5. For this life is but the preparation for eternity and judgment — but the beginning of the soul's real being. This is another and the crowning thought, that should govern in the selection of this world's pursuits. These pursuits do not end in themselves; they all look forward to interminable consequences. They are the habits of a being who cannot die. They are that course of thought, principle, and action, which determines the place and the fortunes of the soul through eternity. They are, therefore, of unspeakable moment. It were an infinite folly, then, in choosing a profession for these few years, to limit one's views to those years only; to think of the wealth, comfort, respectability of this life alone. For suppose that he should thus — which seems indeed to be

the object of some ambitious plans — gain the whole world and lose his own soul? What would it profit him? It is a most short-sighted and ruinous policy, which leaves out of sight the most important item — the most certain and enduring gain and loss — to plan for time, and take no account of eternity; to provide for earth, at the certainty of losing, at last, both earth and heaven.

These, then, are the principles which should guide all persons in the choice of their mode of life. All alike should seek that place for which their natural talent is adapted, to which their education has fitted them, and in which they can be useful to their fellow-men; remembering their responsibility to God, and their duty to be always preparing for eternity.

The application of these principles to the class of educated men is easy. They constitute a highly-privileged class. They stand on an elevation in the midst of society. They are, in a considerable degree, separated from the toil and drudgery of bodily existence, and set apart to the nobler work of wisdom and intellectual life. They are permitted to live for the mind, which is a higher thing than to live for the body. And when they are deliberating, therefore, to what work they shall devote themselves, it is easy to see that they are bound to decide for some work which corresponds to this intellectual preparation, and will enable them best to avail themselves of it; that they cannot be allowed to descend from the eminence on which Providence has placed them, and do that inferior work which were better done by less furnished men.

There are two great departments of labor in all civilized and improving society. The first is that which takes care of the bodily wants — the sustenance and accommodation, the pleasures and the luxuries, of ordinary life — the

department of those who support, and improve, and adorn man's physical existence, supplying the wants, and advancing the gratifications, of the animal and social nature. The other department is connected with the mind It is engaged in ministering to the intellect. It toils in the world of thought, of truth, of philanthropy, of morality. It provides for and furnishes the interior and spiritual life. It belongs to the last, to keep knowledge from decay, and spread it among the busy men — to keep law, and morality, and religion, alive in the world, and prevent the engrossing occupations and struggles of sensual life from turning the improvements and elegances of art into the ornaments and instruments of a splendid but degrading sensualism. There must be these men, who shall hold intellect, and law, and truth, supreme; whose business it shall be to uphold the torch of knowledge amid the busy crowd; whose profession it shall be to see to it that the love of gold, the passion for display, the thirst for power, the appetite for pleasure, do not get the ascendency in the community, and bring back the days of effeminacy, ignorance, and anarchy. There must be men whose chosen object in life this shall be; and when we constantly hear, and deeply feel, that, in this country, the hope of our national prosperity rests on the knowledge and virtue of its inhabitants, we see that men thus devoted must be many; we see that this is the class to be provided above all and before all. The very excitement, and pressure, and tremendous prosperity of the times, make it certain that every other department will be amply cared for. There are temptations the most fascinating to urge men into the active and stirring pursuits. But there is danger that the same circumstances will draw them away from intellectual professions, and quench their love for letters and truth, and that the

mental culture and moral discipline which are so essential to the safety of a people, in this state of worldly excitement and absorption, will be abandoned to neglect.

When you are selecting, therefore, your future course of action, bear this upon your minds, and remember that, in such an emergency, your advantages and rank as educated men never were given you by the Lord of all, that you might throw them aside, and join the crowd of those who conduct the common business of the world. That crowd is large enough, and needs no such accession. The service of trade and Mammon never will want votaries. But society does want teachers. The public mind does want guides. The commonwealth greatly needs able overseers of the intellect and character of its sons; and it is this — this most pressing, crying, perilous want — which, if unsupplied, is to bring disaster and darkness upon all the prospective glory of our age. This is the work to which you are bound to devote yourselves. An intellectual preparation demands an intellectual profession. It is only in such a one that you can practically do that for which your peculiar education has fitted you; only in such a one that you can be sure of doing *that* good to your fellow-men, which your peculiar opportunities have qualified you for doing — therefore, sure of most effectually glorifying God, who distinguished you with these privileges; because, then, you will be doing the highest work which is now to be done, and which, if not done by men like you, will be done, can be done, by nobody.

There is a struggle going on in the world, as there is in every individual, between the flesh and the spirit — between sensuality and selfishness, and truth, morality, and knowledge. It is at this moment at its height in this country.

The two causes are arrayed against each other in vehement action. The development of the public resources, the rapid advancement in wealth, the spirit of enterprise, all tend to bind men's hearts to the world, and to make the good things of this life their glory and their all; and if they are allowed to have that result, they will hurry the people to ruin, and the nation to decay, after the example of the older empires of the world. Who are to make opposition to this tendency? Who is to give strength to the principles of truth, and higher interests? Who is to come in and check the depravity, and neutralize the ill influence, of this mechanical age. Who are to cast the preserving salt into these agitated waters? Is it not plainly those who, like you, have been early taught how much wisdom is better than rubies, and the prosperity of the thinking and immortal mind to be preferred to all the accumulations of this transitory state?

There can be no hesitation as to your duty, therefore. You are to enter upon intellectual pursuits. You are to devote yourselves to the salvation of the country from the debasement which follows at the heels of its own terrible prosperity. You are to step in, like the prophet, with your censers of living fire, between the living and the dead, and stay the plague of selfish worldliness. You are to form part of that illustrious band of devoted teachers, who, laboring perhaps in obscurity, have yet, in every nation, done more for its character, its happiness, and its permanent fame, than its kings and warriors, and to whom alone it is owing, that the reputation of these very kings and warriors did not perish in the wreck of time. If you quit this band, — if, tempted by lucre and the love of the world, you forsake this holy company, — you prove yourselves traitors to

your country's best interests, and basely, for the sake of your own private advantage, advance your own prosperity when you might have aided her highest good.

You may be told, by some, that the professions are already crowded, and that you must go into business, because there is no room for you in the intellectual departments of life. This may be true; and it reads a sad lesson that it should be. Those professions which promise most of earth's wealth and distinctions, those, — like all places which promise worldly wealth — are full. But the place of *instructor* is not crowded. The great cause of education, on which the future so essentially depends, is crying out for competent workmen, and in all parts of this extended country, there is room for the most useful and honorable labor in behalf of society. The places of religious instruction are not crowded. The rush into other departments of life has left the church unsupplied. The population is rapidly advancing, without any thing like an equal increase in the numbers of the Christian ministry, and our newer settlements are in danger of growing up without the advantages of adequate religious instruction. For those, therefore, who have a noble-minded and disinterested desire to serve their generation to the greatest possible extent; who feel their responsibility to God for the fullest employment of the peculiar advantages he has bestowed on them; who are above the selfishness of consulting only for their own weal, — for such there is room enough. They may take their places with the world's lights and guides, with the teachers and philanthropists. They may not fare sumptuously; they may have no part in the excitement of worldliness; but they will live in the perpetual excitement of doing good, and the happy companionship of a satisfied

conscience. They will have a reward better than wealth, in knowing that multitudes will remember to bless them, while those successful competitors in the business of getting rich will be forgotten; that, when the palaces and fortunes of the others are scattered to the winds, the fruits of their toil will remain; and that death, which is the close of hope, enjoyment, and honor, to *them*, will prove to themselves but the opening of a new scene of imperishable good.

It may be that the suggestions of our subject come too late for the guidance of many of those in whom we are specially interested to-day. They have already chosen the pursuit on which they are soon to enter. But it is not too late — it is never too late — to reconsider the *principles* on which the decision was made, — never too late to put the question in a religious form, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It is to this point, my friends, that, in now addressing you for the last time as your minister, I would call your serious attention — that you are responsible to your Maker and Judge for the course you pursue, and the principles on which you select that course. I would remind you, at this momentous crisis of your life, — when, as I have said, the future complexion of your character is to be greatly dependent on your decision, — to turn to him in earnest and continued supplication for guidance, and then to go forth, anxious, first of all, to do the work which he has appointed you. I would call back to your thoughts the many prayers that you have offered together, here at this altar, where you are soon to collect again no more forever; and to the many instructions in religious truth, and exhortations to piety and virtue, which you have been receiving from this sacred desk, from which the last is now falling on your ears. I would ask you to think how you have received them —

how you have profited by them. If they have been wasted upon you, do not leave the place until you have raised the cry of pardon to Him whose wisdom and word you have so thoughtlessly despised. If they have been cherished in any honest purpose, let them help and ripen the resolution with which you now address yourselves to a new era of life. We would gladly believe that all has not been thrown away; we trust in God that some religious principles have been nurtured in your souls, and that, however you may be conscious of errors and insensibility, there remains with you a power not altogether dormant, which will carry you on steadfastly and acceptably in future duty. So far as you may have failed, now is the time for remedy. You may begin a new era with a new resolution, and prove your sense of God's goodness and truth by your future allegiance to his will. So far as your conscience approves, take its testimony thankfully, and let it cheer you in a persevering adherence to principle.

We send you out to work the work of the Lord. Our prayers go with you, that he will bless you, and that you may not be false to your great trust. We shall be glad to hear of your welfare; to know of your success; to witness your works and your honor. We shall devoutly thank God for all the credit and usefulness of your lives. We shall always rejoice in what you may do for society, for education, for religion, and through them for yourselves. We shall have shame and sorrow, only when we hear that you have attained to prosperity by selfish pursuits, or sunk to degradation through vicious habits. Be upright, be generous, be public-spirited, be devout. Serve God and your generation, in his fear. Honor and advance the religion of Jesus Christ by a faithful life and a consistent profession.

Earth may give you its temporal prosperity or its temporal adversity, — you cannot fail; — and in that great day, when the honors and affections of this life shall all be ended, you will be ready to receive that crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give, at that day, to all them that love his appearing. God grant it for his mercy's sake!

SERMON XX.

EDUCATION THE BUSINESS OF LIFE.

PROVERBS IV. 13.

TAKE FAST HOLD OF INSTRUCTION; LET HER NOT GO; KEEP HER, FOR SHE IS THY LIFE.

THESE words comprise the substance and express the spirit of the parental exhortations which occupy the early portion of the book of Proverbs. The whole passage is founded on the idea of the essential importance of education to the true end of human existence. It sets forth instruction and wisdom, knowledge and virtue, as the principal objects of interest, and the most desirable of all attainments. By these the character is to be formed, life to be disciplined, honor and felicity attained, and the purposes of God in the creation and government of man to be effected.

The spirit of the whole passage is most comprehensive and profound. It is well worthy the wisest of kings, from whom it proceeded; and it stands in striking contrast with the limited notions on the subject which are but too prevalent in the modern and Christian world. Properly considered, it contains the doctrine, that human life is a season designed for the growth and perfecting of the human being; that it has no other purpose; that every appointment of human condition is intended to forward this end; in a

word, that education is the great object of life, in the same sense, and to the same degree, that it is the object of the schools in which childhood is disciplined and taught.

My purpose is to illustrate this view, and to carry it out into some of its applications.

In order to this, it will first be necessary to consider somewhat exactly what is to be understood by education, and in what manner its great ends are to be effected.

1. We say that education is the business of life. Begin with the infant, and observe how, from the very first breath, every stage in its growth is but the antecedent of another, its chief occupation being to get ready for the next. The infant is nothing but a little bundle of undeveloped faculties, of no use excepting in prospect; its immediate life is to no end except to unfold the creature for something future. It spreads out into childhood; it has now grown to be an active, reasoning, enjoying creature; but it is still incomplete, still in a process of development for something further. It arrives at youth, and this is only a stepping-stone to manhood: manhood ends not in itself; it hoards and plans for age; while extremest age, lingering out the last hours of its long year, has still something to do in preparing each day for the morrow. Thus obviously is life occupied with preparation for the future. To cause men to enter on that future with the best advantage, is the purpose of education, in whatever form dispensed.

Consisting thus in preparation for the future, it evidently implies three things: First, the development of the faculties. These lie folded up in the child, unobserved and inactive. By watchful and assiduous culture they are to be unfolded in their true proportions, and to be made skilful by judicious exercise. Second, the acquisition of knowledge, — without which one rushes upon the future

like a blind man into a wilderness. Knowledge is safety, light, and power; ignorance is darkness, peril, and imbecility. Third, special fitness for the special employment on which one is to enter. Education is not to be conducted at random, nor with a merely general intent. It has regard to the peculiar calling of the individual. It would fit him to act well his part in the precise sphere which he is destined to fill.

These three things, — the development of the faculties, the acquisition of knowledge, and the fitness for approaching duty, — are all equally essential to the idea of a complete education. It is a great evil that they are oftentimes separated. One man amasses stores of knowledge, various and inexhaustible, but without intellectual discipline, and with no reference to his own future walk in life. He thus makes himself a useless storehouse of information, where every thing is put away, and where nothing can be found; a walking cyclopedia, that never opens at the right place. Another thinks only of fitting himself in the most summary manner for the profession he has chosen: becoming expert in that, he is a dunce in all things else. And thus, from error of one sort or another, it is rare to find a man, who, with expanded views of what the perfection of his nature demands, has harmoniously disciplined all his powers and mastered various knowledge, and has at the same time faithfully fitted himself for his own practical calling; thus giving to the world assurance of a man. Those to whom are granted the opportunity and encouragement to do this, are frequently unaware of its importance, and thoughtlessly throw away the golden season; so that the public nurseries of learning are continually sending forth half educated youths, who bring reproach on those that reared them, and bewail through life their early negligence and conceit.

But those who understand their position, and wisely act up to it, enter on life well furnished for its offices, and enjoy through all their course the satisfaction which belongs to duty fulfilled and powers employed.

This, then, is one sense in which education is the business of life. It is the business of every season to prepare for the next. But there is yet another and a higher sense. Life itself is but one period of existence, antecedent to another and final period. Life itself is but the childhood of the immortal spirit, getting ready for its future youth and eternal manhood. Life itself, therefore, is but one long school-day; its great purpose the discipline of the powers, the acquisition of knowledge, the fitting of the character, in preparation for that immortal action to which the grave introduces. This is the business of life; the business of every period of life; and that idea of education is deceptive and worthless, which does not bear this in view, and is not steadfastly directed to its accomplishment. The preparation demanded for the functions of earthly existence is partial and incomplete; it requires the exercise and culture of only some of the faculties and dispositions of the man. The perfect man — he who is thoroughly furnished by the completest culture of *all* his powers, faculties, and affections — is educated for heaven. For earth and its duties far less would be requisite. The happiness of time may be enjoyed by a half-developed and half-enlightened soul; but not that of eternity. He alone is properly educated, who has fitted himself both for the place he is to occupy in the present state of his being, and for that which he is to fill in the future; who has done his duty, not merely as an artisan, a politician, a patriot, but as a man; not only as having an interest in society here, but as one who is hereafter to join a higher society; who has, therefore, done such justice to his

whole nature, that his character will bear the test of new duties in the new and higher relations of his future being.

It is lamentable to observe how short of this idea falls the common notion on this subject, and how low is, consequently, the aim of human endeavor. To be educated, in vulgar language, is simply to have passed through that process of schooling which custom has made proper for the station which the individual is to hold. He that is destined to a mechanical trade has finished his education at the age of fourteen; he that is destined to a learned profession, when he is graduated from some college, or receives some other testimony that he has read a prescribed number of books. The prevalence of this inadequate and poor use of the term tends to keep down the standard of acquisition. It fills the world with good artisans, who are only half men and half citizens, and furnishes diplomas to many who have accomplished any thing at college, rather than become *educated* men. But so long as the object of life is mistaken, this evil will remain. While men esteem it the chief thing to get a living in the world, or to succeed in a profession, they will limit their notions of education to a preparation for that end. Why should they seek a higher cultivation, when this is amply sufficient for every purpose they have in view? Their aim is to become good artists in a certain line, so that they may earn their food and clothing, and enable the great machine of society to go on. As to making themselves complete men, well-proportioned and full-grown rational beings, it would be far beyond what is necessary to the end they propose, and therefore is not attempted.

We must, therefore, have a juster idea of the aim of man's being. We must understand that it is, and can be, nothing less than to arrive at the full perfection of the nature with

which God has endowed him. To stop short of this, is to leave the divine work incomplete. Made to reach indefinitely after wisdom, goodness, and happiness, in this world and the next, he can rightfully propose to himself no other end; and his education is in no just sense finished until this end is attained.

Whence we observe there are two essential deficiencies in the common judgment: first, that the cultivation of the intellect is limited to that small exercise of the mind, which just fits for some one occupation; and second, that the cultivation of the character is left almost altogether (in all formal education) to circumstance and accident. The endeavor, with too many, seems to be, to discipline and inform the intellect as little as will possibly do, and to leave the character to take care of itself. Not that to the full extent of this description the error often exists, but error of this kind in only too common. To what shall it be attributed, but to a too low estimate of life?

We are, therefore, to look for an adequate idea of education in the true notion of the object of life. Men must be made awake to the purpose for which they exist, and the destiny to which they are passing. They must learn that rational and immortal man can rationally pursue only an immortal object; and that, as nothing is immortal but truth, virtue, and God, the object of life must be to possess himself of them. In other words, he is rational and immortal; pursuits which are confined to earth, and end at death, are not immortal; therefore not rational; therefore not the object of existence. The immortal must be the object. Intellect and character endure; these are to be his charge. These are to be cultivated for the sake of their permanent continuance and undying value. This cultivation is the great business to be accomplished upon earth; and there-

fore it is that I said, education is the great object of life. It is the unfolding and training of all the faculties of the man, so that he shall reach the perfection, intellectual and moral, of which he is capable, and be prepared for any station that may be assigned him in the present and the future state.

II. We were next to say, by what method the desired result was to be effected.

There are three processes — by instruction, by circumstances, by self-discipline.

First, instruction; by which I intend all the express external means of human or of divine appointment, which are used in early or later life. This is sometimes spoken of as including the whole of education. But a little thoughtful observation convinces us that it is far from being so in fact; that in truth formal teaching is little more than offering favorable opportunities and excitements to the individual, which he may neglect, and so, with the best instruction, remain uneducated. Thus we familiarly know that the highest universities, with all the facilities and inducements that are brought together there, succeed in properly *educating* but a portion of those to whom they are applied. It is equally the case with all formal teaching. The Christian ministry is an institution for the instruction of men in the truth and duties that pertain to their chief and most lasting relations; its teachings are perpetually uttered in the ears of men who listen to them one day in the week all their lives long; and yet how small a proportion of them are in fact instructed so as to attain to any complete understanding of the great things taught, or to evince any influence of them in their lives. Essential as direct instruction may be, if left to itself, unaided and alone,

it can accomplish scarce any thing. It needs the concurrence of circumstances, and of the will of the instructed.

Circumstances have more to do with the acquisition of knowledge and the formation of character than is often supposed. They make the atmosphere by which one is surrounded, the climate in which he resides. They make up that assemblage of invisible, intangible, indescribable influences, which, in the moral world as in the natural, give a complexion, hue, constitution, character, to all who are subjected to it; influences to which they of necessity yield, and which they in vain seek to counteract. No effort could give to the inhabitants of hotter and more voluptuous climes the hardihood and vigor of those who inhabit the temperate regions; for all the influences of nature, mysterious and inexplicable as they are, are against it. Place the plants and fruits of the tropics beneath the skies of a higher latitude, and no care will prevent them from degenerating. The invisible operations of climate are not to be counteracted nor resisted. So in the moral constitution of man. There is a climate formed by the society in which one lives, and the circumstances to which he is there exposed, whose influence may not be detected or described, but which does more than all things else to temper his mind, to give the tone to his dispositions, to form his principles and habits, and to determine the growth, proportions, and stature of his whole character. It is of the first importance in education to give heed to this consideration. Inattention to this is the cause of frequent ill success in what appear to be the best arranged processes of instruction. Great pains have been taken, and expensive apparatus employed, with most unsatisfactory results. It was the wrong sort of pains. The controlling power of circum-

stances was overlooked. The influences of situation, companions, example, and social habits, were disregarded.

To these processes is to be added that of self-discipline. Without it nothing efficient can be done by force of teaching, or by the best arrangement of most favorable circumstances. The individual must have a desire to make progress, and must exercise his own powers in making it. It is when he cheerfully, with voluntary labor and watching, applies himself to learn and to become good, that success crowns the endeavor. Then there is no wasted effort, no restraint, no dead weight of unwilling faculties; but all the powers consenting do their parts unitedly and zealously, every thing helps, nothing hinders, and difficulties give way. Hence it is that many of the most distinguished men in letters and in arts are individuals who have risen by their own efforts, in spite of circumstances, self-taught; while crowds of those on whom circumstances and instruction had lavished the first opportunities of the age, have been forgotten in their mediocrity, because they made no effort for themselves. So also in morals. By determined efforts of self-discipline, many have healed their bad dispositions, and resisted adverse circumstances of temptation, and wrought out high characters of virtue; while others — guarded carefully by all the circumstances of their life from temptation and trial; brought up in the midst of pure influences; early taught, by precept and example, the fear of God and the honor of doing his will — have yet, for want of self-discipline, sunk away before temptation, and died corrupted and hopeless. There is no education like self-education. Without it there is no strength to the character, nor assurance of a happy end.

By these processes, then, is education conducted — instruction, circumstances, self-discipline. Each is necessary to

the other two, and all three must unite in order to that result which we call *character*. Some men live at random, and then are wholly the creatures of circumstance; some rely on others to teach them, and so are always backward and feeble; some men educate themselves, and they are full of energy and progress, — but of necessity they are only partially developed, and in some particulars act always at a disadvantage. The complete man is the result of all; instructed from men and from God, enlightened and strengthened by a wise use of all the circumstances of his position, exercised and hardened by vigilant self-discipline. This man is wise, watchful, self-governed, self-sustaining; every part of him is in its right place, and of its right proportions, and every faculty obedient to his will. His judgment has not been strengthened at the expense of his affections, nor his sensibility nourished to the enfeebling of his conscience, nor his imagination put at perpetual war with his reason; but all his faculties and dispositions, like one family of loving brothers, equally developed in harmonious companionship as friends and helpers of each other, have formed a steadfast band for the service of truth, duty, and God. He is thus armed for the whole warfare of virtue on earth, furnished for the full action of glory in heaven. He cannot live for temporal or limited ends. His rational, moral, and immortal nature vindicates itself from the dominion of this sublunary sphere, and he walks through the valleys of time like an heir of eternity, making preparation to go and receive his inheritance.

The general uses of this subject are as obvious as they are important. The principal application must be left for the afternoon. Meantime, let us observe what the doctrine thus far expounded may teach us.

1. It rebukes the prevalent misconceptions, which bind

down the aim of intellectual effort to that drudgery of the world by which the body is supported; which account the rational and immortal spirit sufficiently taught, and well enough employed, when it has become skilful to answer the question, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

2. It rebukes the negligence and self-indulgence of those who, possessing, as we possess, peculiar advantages for the highest intellectual progress, content themselves with the lowest, think mental toil a drudgery, repine at the requisites for improvement, and set the enjoyments of indolence above the solid honors of attainment. This childish love of ease, this stupid unconcern about the great interests of their being, by which so many promising minds are corrupted and misled, never can consist with any true and manly idea of the purposes of life or the dignity of rational being.

3. It rebukes the yet more common error of setting aside from our notions of education the progress of character, and establishment in virtue. It shows that these should stand first in our regard; that the others are valuable in proportion as they lead directly to these; that what cannot die should hold precedence of that which may perish to-day; that what is equally useful in all worlds and at every stage of the eternal being should be in higher esteem than that which is valuable only for dwellers on this planet, and because adapted to the emergencies of the present life. And of how much human knowledge is this the description!

4. And thus it brings us to the great duty of man, the leading object of life; the self-discipline of the character by which preparation is made for eternity. Self-direction, self-government, self-education is the chief care. To lay up knowledge, to attain a profession, to gain a livelihood, to

reach distinction, — these are well; but *to form the character* is the great acquisition. Without it, the rest is but accumulating treasures to be laid down at the tomb. Some things may be taught, but virtue must be acquired; some things may be imparted, but a good character must be won; riches and honor may be inherited, but heaven and immortality must be earned. Men may clothe, and feed, and honor you; but they cannot educate you; that you must do for yourself. The opportunity is nothing; the use you make of it is every thing. The written volume might as well be a burnt roll of Herculaneum, and the bright tuition of Christ but the mummery of a savage, if you do not apply your own intellect vigorously, and submit your own life actively to their power. You yourself might as well have been born a wild rover of the forest, or a dumb inhabitant of the ocean, if you will not cultivate that character which alone makes you truly superior to them, nor lay hold on that glory, honor, and immortality, by securing which you alone make your being of longer continuance than theirs. Be persuaded of this, and live accordingly. *Take fast hold of Instruction; let her not go; keep her;* for SHE IS YOUR LIFE.

SERMON XXI.

EDUCATION THE BUSINESS OF LIFE.

PHILIPPIANS III. 12.

NOT AS THOUGH I HAD ALREADY ATTAINED, EITHER WERE ALREADY PERFECT; BUT I FOLLOW AFTER, IF THAT I MAY APPREHEND THAT FOR WHICH ALSO I AM APPREHENDED OF CHRIST JESUS.

We were engaged, in the morning, with some remarks on the nature and objects of education, regarded as the business of human life. I proceed, as proposed, to make application of the doctrine then advanced to the circumstances of the present occasion. This I do in the spirit and under the guidance of the sentiment expressed by Paul in the text. That sentiment, which he uttered in reference to the Christian progress, is the suitable one to be adopted by all who, to-day or at any time, are surveying the course they have past, and from one step in human progress are advancing to another. In point of knowledge and character, they must feel that *they have not yet attained, are not yet perfect;* their education is not completed; they are yet *to follow after*, to press forward, to strive further, for the perfection that is required of them. That perfection is moral and immortal. Christ is the guide to it. That he may lead them to it, he has *apprehended them*, that is, has seized upon them, has urged his doctrines on their regard, and his motives on

their conscience; and they are bound, therefore, like the apostle, to attempt also to seize upon, to apprehend, that which he has laid before them; namely, their moral perfection.

This sentiment, applicable to all the acquisitions of human education, I would urge on the attention of those who are about to leave this place of instruction. Although, in the language of the world, they have "finished their education," let them be persuaded *that they have only begun it, and that to complete it is henceforth to be the business of their life.*

This is the point to which I ask their attention; and if I can succeed in making them aware of its magnitude, and in earnest to lay their plans accordingly, I shall feel that a worthy close has been put to the teaching and worship of this place.

I. Their business henceforth is to carry on to its completion the education here begun.

We have seen that there are three purposes to be accomplished by that education; namely, the development of the faculties, the acquisition of knowledge, and fitness for the future calling of the individual. In respect to each of these, the remark is to be made, that they have not yet attained, they are not yet perfect, they are to follow after. The development of the faculties is as yet but partial. The minds of few of them have approached their maturity. Many have been cultivated so partially, by being exercised on certain favorite subjects, to the comparative neglect of others, that some of their faculties lie almost dormant and untried; and those which have been universally exercised have yet been so imperfectly disciplined, that their whole force and capacity are not yet tested. Then, too, they have evidently but commenced the acquisition of knowledge.

They have learned just enough to understand how much is yet to be known, and to be introduced to a Pisgah sight of the rich lands before them. As to what is styled a *classical* education in the older countries, no university on this side the water pretends to impart it; and if our scholars ever intend to stand up with the masters of the other hemisphere, they must esteem their labors to be only begun when they leave the bosom of *alma mater*. In like manner, for the professional labors of life, they yet have the chief preparation to make; and they can enter on them hopefully only by resolving to continue the studious diligence manifested hitherto. In regard to moral character, the same remark is still more emphatically just. The subjection of the will to the conscience; the obedience of the appetite and passions to the law of right; the habitual self-control, gentleness, disinterestedness, and generosity of feeling and action, which make the honorable and amiable man; the purity, devoutness, and spirituality, which make the religious and immortal man, — in regard to these high requisites of character, how many are but children, wayward, self-willed, self-indulgent, lawless, godless! How many have but just awakened to their moral responsibility, have scarcely begun the serious discipline of life, and are seen feeling their way along, vacillating and unsteady! How few have arrived at a settled, single-hearted purpose and pursuit of excellence as the principal thing! How few have made up their minds that virtue is the chief good, that God is the first of friends, that Christ is the best of masters, that heaven is the most desirable possession! And as for those who have received this holy conviction, and devoted themselves to it with resolute principle, how deeply do *they* feel, they have not yet attained, are not yet perfect!

None of these objects are as yet accomplished. Life is henceforth to be devoted to them.

II. Let us attend to some suggestions on the manner in which this is to be done, in connection with the principles laid down in the previous discourse.

1. It is to be done, first, by continuing the course of intellectual action already begun.

It is a strange fact, that many, whose early years have given them the best opportunities of intellectual culture, no sooner arrive at manhood, and choose their own pursuits, than they abandon their habits of mental activity, and enter on engagements incompatible with studious life. The demand for action in this growing country is so great, and its rewards are so immediate and so dazzling, that young men are easily tempted to prefer the competitions of business to the unexciting toils of the library, and the ranks of sober scholarship are liable to be deplorably thinned. Let us not deny that the entrance of men highly educated into the various branches of business and all orders of society, may have a tendency, like so much leaven, to affect the whole community, pervade it with higher tastes, and give it a better tone. But let us remember that this can hardly be done if these individuals cease their intellectual habits, forsake their scholarly pursuits, and set no example of honoring, cherishing, and loving letters. If they would make good their apology, let them be found among the patrons of learning. Let them be distinguished for an interest in whatever enlarges and informs the mind. Let them be marked for the honor they do to their early studies, by retaining and displaying the savor of their influence. Let them evince a sense of their value by still dedicating to them their leisure, and finding in them their choice recreation. Let them

make their own the sentiment of the great Roman,* and the hours which other men give to selfish pleasure, to needless rest, to festive indulgences, to idle, and perchance hurtful enjoyment, let them consecrate to the recreations of mind, to the pleasures of taste, to the yet further culture of knowledge, and the communion of high thought. Let them plant around their dwellings trees from the groves of the Academy; let them refresh themselves amid the weariness of toil with draughts from the fountain of the Muses. If, instead of this, they totally abandon the path of letters, and rush down into the vulgar callings of vulgar life, seeking to live as contentedly without intellectual resources, as those who have had no opportunity to secure them, their country will look on them as recreant to their obligation to her, and they must bear the shame of burying talents that might have conferred public benefits.

This, then, is one method by which the work begun is to be continued. It corresponds, you may observe, with the first of the universal methods named this morning, — direct instruction. It is prolonging the custom of receiving and mastering express lessons from the minds of other men.

2. The next method to be proposed corresponds with what was named as the second general mode of education, that, namely, of circumstances. Let them esteem it a duty to surround themselves with circumstances of life which shall be favorable to progress and character. Do not enter a pursuit which allows no room for the continued cultivation of letters and elegant tastes, or which is adverse to habits of virtue.

This is a decided dictate of wisdom. Why should one hazard the chief end of his being? why jeopard his prin-

* Cicero, oratio pro Archia.

cipal interests by selecting, without reference to them, his place, his occupations, his companions? and, through this carelessness, perhaps, be all his life long striving against a stream — be struggling against the deleterious breath of an unhealthy moral atmosphere?

Yet how sadly is this consideration overlooked! The occupation and the place of residence, by whose influences the man's character is to be so much affected, are selected without any regard to this circumstance, from some motive of present convenience, some prejudice of feeling, some temporary fancy, or some plea of interest. Let us put the question to the men whom we meet, "Why did you enter this calling? Why did you choose this place for your home?" The answer, in almost every case, would disclose some reasons of worldly interest or accidental concurrence of circumstances, without the slightest thought of the tendency of the calling and the situation to affect their own growth and character. Nay, the most intimate and responsible connections are formed with the same mad thoughtlessness; so that men are found to have built to themselves homes, as well as laid out for themselves employments, the whole direct agency of which is to create a selfish and worldly spirit, a mean and irritable temper. They thus deliberately put themselves into situations which offer no encouragement to the holier and more generous impulses of their nature, where every taste for the spiritual is rebuked, and every effort of conscientiousness and disinterestedness must be made by a violent opposition to the entire habit and order of the circle in which they live. We regard with horror the folly of those who, merely that they may grow rich a little the faster, cast themselves into the pestiferous atmosphere of a distant city, and fill the churchyards on the Mississippi with tomb-stones from New England. But is it a less folly

to jeopard the moral life by a similar recklessness? Is it less to put the character to hazard, to expose the soul to corruption, in the pestilent neighborhood of demoralizing principles? Human virtue, alas! is not so vigorous a plant that we can afford to trifle with it thus. It needs watching and training. It is perpetually failing in the most favorable exposure; it is unsafe oftentimes in the very bosom of the purest families; it is sometimes blasted by a single breath of contaminating air. And how, then, can you dare to rush heedlessly into the world, and take up your abode there, without first assuring yourselves of the safety of your position, without satisfactory provision for your moral security?

3. You are to carry forward this work of your education by action. Character is not only expressed by actions, it is formed by them. Its foundation is laid in thought, disposition, purpose, but it is built up and established by action. Sentiments of virtue die out from the soul, unless they gain substance and life by corresponding deeds. Feelings and purposes of philanthropy, of patriotism, of justice, perish for want of sustenance, except they be put in form, and come to palpable results. They cannot *make* the character; they may even be in contradiction to the character. It is, therefore, part of the business of the education we speak of, to give expression in outward energy to the inward wishes and state of the mind. Do something by way of manifesting your thoughts; see how they look when brought out from your mind into broad, palpable observation; give them courage and strength; fix and establish them, by thus, as we may say, *committing* them in the eyes of the world.

There is something to many minds very fascinating in the idea of learned leisure and meditative seclusion. It is pleasant to with draw from the turmoil and rough encoun-

ter of common life to the peaceful calm of study, communing with the spirits of the departed wise in their works, rather than mingling in the ill-assorted crowd of the living. But this is to shun the responsibility which lies on every man to do something for those with whom God has placed him; this is to seek only his own good, and not that of others; this is to sink in selfishness what was given him for usefulness; and it issues in defrauding him of that solid virtue which can grow only by exercise; it weakens the nerve, palsies the energy of his own moral nature. There is no character where there is no action. There is no virtue where all endowments are hoarded for personal enjoyment, and none offered for the participation of others.

In seeking, therefore, the growth and perfection of your own nature, seek for, and assiduously use, opportunities for exercising that nature in active goodness. If you have surrounded yourselves with the favorable circumstances I referred to, this will be easy; your situation and connections, your very calling, will invite you to it. But society has demands on its privileged sons beyond this. In the unsettled state of principle and manners in this growing and restless country, nothing is so greatly needed as a virtuous public spirit in the better informed classes. It is urgently necessary that they stand forward, with wise hearts and bold hands, to stem the torrent of false opinion, to uphold the honor of principle, to determine the suffrage for right, and to maintain truth and religion in their supremacy. The perils of the age, the crisis in the character of a people bursting forth in the immense range of free life with immeasurable resources and interminable numbers, are matters of common remark. The friends of truth, order, and man, are anxiously awake, for something must be done. Who shall do it? Whoever else it may be, those who have

been most favored with opportunities of knowledge and influence, must make themselves of the number. The sons of our colleges must account themselves pledged to the work. They are to do nothing for themselves, excepting so far as they labor in a true public spirit for the good of their generation. Let them come forward, and gird up their strength for the toil. Let them remember that their advantages consecrate them to the cause of goodness, knowledge, truth, and right; to the support of the law; to the maintenance of good institutions; to the honor and spread of virtuous principle, religious faith, and the fear of God. Let them engrave on their souls, and make the motto of their life, those well-known words — "*Human happiness has no perfect security but freedom; freedom none but virtue; virtue none but knowledge; and neither freedom, virtue, nor knowledge has any vigor or immortal hope, except in the principles of the Christian faith, and the sanctions of the Christian religion.*" * Let this be the breath of their public spirit; and let them know, that, just in proportion to their fidelity in this, they minister also to their own purity of principle, and forward their own perfection.

4. While thus the great work of life is pursued by the unceasing pursuit of knowledge, by command of favorable circumstances, and by active interest in good works, it is especially, and yet more, to be secured by private moral and religious self-discipline; by cherishing the principle of personal holiness, and the habits of religious faith.

Character can stand on nothing external. It must be built up from within. The complete man, the whole and

* "An Address to the Citizens of Boston on the 17th of September, 1830, the Close of the Second Century from the first Settlement of the city. By Josiah Quincy, LL. D." p. 53.

perfect human being, is, can be, made such only upon principle. He grows up by the unfolding of a seminal principle. He is builded a holy temple to the Lord upon a deep-laid foundation.

This is to be the matter of chief solicitude. The life of the soul is the true life; the action of thought, sentiment, feeling, the true action. The spring is within. The happiness and the woe are within. Within, therefore, is the arena on which the contest for character and immortality is to be waged. The noise of the battle may be abroad in the world, but the counsels which conduct it are in the chambers of the soul; there the great debate is carried on; there the plans of the holy campaign are laid; there rings the eloquence that incites; thence are issued forth the weapons that arm; and there are to be found the treachery or the cowardice by which the kingdom of God is oftener lost than by overthrow on the field of action. The kingdom of God is within; and what can secure it, if the work of religious self-discipline be relaxed?

One of the most distinguished monarchs of whom history gives the record, — one of the few eminent for immortal works in letters as well as vigorous deeds of arms, — when about bequeathing the kingdom to his son, addressed him in these memorable words: "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever." * With this charge, the young prince entered on his inheritance. With the same charge should all young men be sent out to the preparation for their own. They are appointed to a

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

kingdom as well as he; not an earthly, but a heavenly; not over the tribes of Israel, but over their own souls, over the extended regions of knowledge, over the wide empire of truth, over the affluent domains of virtue, over the boundless realms of eternity. For such is the promise to the sons of faith, who become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. All things are theirs; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, — the wisdom of the wise, the counsel of the holy, the fellowship of the blest; whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are theirs; — whatever the compass of nature, or the vicissitudes of time, or the appointments of Providence, or the mysteries of eternity, can offer to the instruction and greatness of a rational and immortal being, — all are theirs, — and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

This is the great issue of human life. This is the end to which the educating processes of our present existence point forward. A rational immortal can be content with nothing short of this. It is the maturity of his being, regarded in its entire nature and all its faculties, in its boundless obligations of duty and its immortal thirst for happiness. That man is unfaithfully trained who allows himself to fall short of this; who, for the sake of any temporary end, abridges himself of the grand result, strips himself of the final glory. That result, be it repeated, is only to be secured by a diligent process of self-discipline, maintained through life. He who, without this, casts himself on the current of the world, and becomes engrossed in its exciting action, will find himself inevitably seduced from the highest pursuit. It demands a thoughtful and resolute vigor to assert for the mind and its invisible good that superiority which they deserve.

* 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.

It is only to be done by expressly kindling up within, and laboriously feeding, the fires of the spiritual life. He must make it his business to live the life of the soul, who is not willing to sell himself to the world. He must toil in the self-discipline of holiness and faith, who would accomplish the perfection to which he has been called.

If there be any force in the sentiments advanced, I would commend them especially to the regard of those who are now passing away from this to another scene of their education. They are still to be, in some sense, the pupils of direct instruction, and still exposed to the fashioning power of circumstance; their experience has been unwisely used, if it have not made them ready to turn all to their benefit. But they are to depend more than ever on their power over themselves; they are to be saved or lost, both in their worldly and eternal interests, chiefly by their fidelity or their neglect in the discipline of their own character. The work begun is still to be carried on; they have as yet made but the first stage of their everlasting progress. It is to be carried on by the duties and trials of external life, which are the means that God appoints for the discipline of his children, and by the activity and efforts of the spirit within, which are the means by which the soul struggles onward in its forward course. They start on their career with some peculiar advantages, and with corresponding obligations. In the years already devoted by friends and teachers to aid the development of the mind, and give direction to its powers; in the care taken to implant the love of truth and rectitude; in the incitements and warnings placed before them, when they have been carried into the history of the past, and made to peruse the picture of glorious virtue and shameful crime; in the doctrines of religious faith; in the exhortations of the house of prayer; in the daily admoni-

tion, through the morning and evening sacrifice of this place, to remember their accountableness, and to cherish the sense of their frailty and their immortality, — in all these, there has been laid upon them a weight of privilege and obligation, which may well make them thoughtful. Let them lay them to heart. Let the solemnity of mind, to which they give rise, hallow the hours of their departure from these shades.

We look on your departure, young friends, with affectionate and anxious interest. Never again shall we meet you all in these sacred services. The ties which have bound us together so long, in the daily offerings to God and the weekly sympathies of the Sabbath, are now to be severed, to be united again, may we hope, — or must we fear? — in the perfect enjoyment of that eternal Sabbath, in which the toils of earth are to be ended, and the perfected spirit to be blest.

Meantime, for you, and for us, the work of life goes on; may it be to our daily and uninterrupted growth in knowledge and virtue, till we reach the completeness of our moral and spiritual being! We commend you to your labors and trials. We pray for your success and for your happiness. We charge you to be faithful to your great trusts. Do not be satisfied with the education you have received, nor live in the midst of infinite knowledge as if you had already attained. Do not propose to yourselves any merely earthly object of pursuit, as if any thing mortal was worthy to content the immortal. Live for usefulness and society. Society is crying out for the aid of perfectly developed men, for the service of minds well proportioned and well-principled. Answer its call. Uphold its institutions. Stand fast for its rights. Plead for its laws. Arm yourselves stoutly against all tyranny of one or of many, against life, or liberty,

or right. Do something, do all you can, to be true counsellors to that sovereign power, public opinion, and to save the land from being ruined by the vice of the ignorant, or the knavery of the knowing. Wherever you go, carry the upright front of the true scholar, the frankness and fairness of the true philosopher, the boldness and meekness of the holy apostle, the self-sacrificing devotion of the sainted martyr. Then you shall be the terror of the ill-doing, and stay, for a time at least, the perils of the people.

Last of all, and above all, consecrate yourselves to God. You are not your own; you have no strength of yourselves; consecrate yourselves to God. Work for him. Ally yourselves to his counsels and his purposes, and secure the coöperation of his will. In the deep life of the spirit, commune with him, and thus nourish yourselves in all goodness. In the affectionate imitation of Jesus Christ, commend yourselves to his blessing, and so find strength and peace. In the hope and prospect of eternity, toil on, rejoicing and persevering, through good report and evil report, knowing that your witness is in heaven, your record on high. And then, when the day of life shall be done, its discipline have ceased, its preparation ended, then may your ripened spirits pass to the final award of the good and faithful; then may you find, one and all, that you have indeed attained, are at length perfect, and, among the glorified immortals of heaven, are partakers of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus.

We part from you at the altar here. Let us meet you at the throne hereafter.

SERMON XXII.

THE DANGERS AND DUTIES OF A STATE OF WORLDLY PROSPERITY.

MARK IV. 19.

AND THE CARES OF THIS WORLD, AND THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES, AND THE LUSTS OF OTHER THINGS ENTERING IN, CHOKE THE WORD, AND IT BECOMETH UNFRUITFUL.

No theme is older, none needeth to be more deeply pondered, than that of the moral tendency of a state of worldly prosperity. Proverbially it is a state of hazard to the character. It is full of peculiar temptations and deteriorating influences, concerning which reason and Scripture warn us, and to the power of which experience and observation widely testify. The whole of life is a condition of temptation, because it was intended to be a condition of discipline; and virtue, in order to its perfect growth and maturity, needs *variety* of discipline. Of course, some modes of discipline are more severe and searching than others; and it seems to be allowed that, to most men, the most searching and severe is that of unmixed prosperity. Men can stand the shock of trouble, disaster, calamity; it makes them feel their weakness, and think of their Maker; they are humbled by it; they submit; they wrap around them the more closely the garment of faith, and walk through the storm. But when all is bright around them,

and the sun of prosperity shines without a cloud, they are apt to forget all but their present delightful sensations, all but their own feelings of enjoyment, and cast from them that protecting mantle, and are left, at length, defenceless and exposed.

The history of mankind bears striking testimony on this subject. From the days of the first kingdom on record to the present time, nations have risen into being and power, amid harshness, privation, self-denial, and the stern virtues of adversity, and, when they have attained the summit of their glory, sunk to ruin through the very excess of their prosperity. Look at the chosen people. In spite of obstacles the most disheartening, they rose up to wealth and grandeur; their shepherd king extended their dominion and strengthened their gates, and Solomon, in all his glory, reigned over them during a long and enviable reign, amid all which is usually regarded as constituting the highest national felicity, when commerce made silver to be as the stones of the streets, and the arts made Jerusalem the wonder of the nations. But what was the result? Even Solomon could not bear that prosperity uncorrupted; and as for the nation, from that day it began to decline; luxury augmented, dissolution and effeminacy came in its train, laxity in morals and indifference in religion followed; and the history of that exalted people becomes thenceforth a history of almost universal degeneracy, till civil broils gave occasion to foreign foes to step in, and Rome completed the ruin which prosperity began. Such is the experience of the Jewish people.

And what is this but the picture of all the great empires which have risen and fallen. Remember Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome, Venice. You may write their histories in one line, and it shall be the same for

all. Powerless and poor, they forced their way onward by the energetic virtues of adversity; they became great, corrupted, and fell — and never fell nation from such cause that rose again.

One trembles to remember this, and then think of his own country. Is there to be no exception to her? Is she, too, to find her way up, in this day of her unexampled prosperity, only to witness as unexpected corruption, and close her great day in a yet more disastrous ruin? We cannot look into the future. But if the experience of five thousand years and of all other nations is to be falsified, it can only be by early securing, *in this our day*, those counteracting influences of knowledge, truth, and religion, which shall stay the plague before it has poisoned all the blood in the arteries of the commonwealth; by taking deliberate heed, that this unprecedented growth of cares, and riches, and pleasure, do not *choke the word, and render it unfruitful.*

What is thus true of nations is equally true of smaller communities, and of individuals. Indeed, the country is prosperous and corrupt only through the prosperity and corruption of individuals. It is private enterprise which makes public wealth, and private character which forms the public morality. The whole admonition, therefore, which results from the contemplation just presented to us, addresses itself to every individual, and bids him heedfully observe it in regard to his own principles and habits; especially to every man of enterprise, acting in a wide and conspicuous sphere; especially — may I say it? — to those who constitute the active, impelling power of an expanding community, like this city,* which we see extending and adorning itself while we gaze, and which draws its admira-

* This sermon was preached in New York.

ble and fearful prosperity from their skill and adventure. Those men, through whose individual and united operation such a world as this is accumulating its numbers, its riches, its luxuries, its pleasures, its arts, and all which makes large cities the glory and the shame of humanity; those men who are enlarging their own estates, and stepping forward, with giddy haste, toward wealth and luxury, just as rapidly as the city amid whose dazzling star they live; those men — what thoughtful person can look at them without anxiety and alarm? He sees them placed, as were, of old, the enterprising merchants of Tyre; becoming princes, like them, and fast rearing their palaces in this western Venice — palaces gorgeous almost as those which are the wonder of the Adriatic Sea — and as he remembers how those proud men, low in guilt, found debasement in the very magnificence which they had created, his heart sinks within him. "For what," he asks, "is to prevent the same causes from producing the same effects here?" And he longs to pour into the souls of his beloved countrymen the salutary warning, that they may be seasonably put on their guard; that they may sanctify their prosperity by a holy use of it, and keep their souls from death, while the world is heaping its treasure at their feet.

Brethren, we cannot in this way appeal to our friends. But we can reflect on our own *personal* relations and duties, and understand what we individually ought to do in our own private lot. Let me beg you to look, therefore, for a moment, at the *dangers and duties* of a state of prosperity, with a view to personal and individual improvement of that state of probation in which God has placed you.

The great hazard of a state of prosperity lies in its influence upon the state of mind and heart. Its effect upon the mind and heart is the great danger to be feared from it:

— it comprises all others, and it accordingly is that pointed out by our Savior in the text. Or, to state this in a little different form, and in one word, — the tendency of prosperity is to *indulgence.* This it is which we are to guard against. It is not unfavorable to the whole character. Quite the contrary. Some virtues grow as naturally in prosperity, as others do in adversity; but, they are not the *higher* virtues; not the lofty and disinterested virtues; not the virtues of the deeply-spiritual character. *Industry* and *honesty* are the two qualities which create the astonishing prosperity which we witness — both virtues in themselves, but both, it is plain, compatible with utter *selfishness;* and *then*, they are not to be ranked as virtues: certainly, selfishness is both vicious and irreligious. Hence it often happens that, when men have reached the station or rank at which they have been aiming, they are corrupted; their selfishness of principle causes them to expend wholly on themselves; they are distinguished for nothing but faring sumptuously every day, together with an absence of all true generosity, humanity, and public spirit; and they at last *die to themselves*, as they lived to themselves. Their honesty may be retained, — not however, as a principle, but only as the *best policy*, — but their industry probably degenerates into mere slothful self-indulgence. For, when selfishness has made a rising man the slave of his *business*, it makes him, when risen, the slave of his sloth and his passions. He has the vices which disfigure, but he cannot have the virtues which adorn, a prosperous station.

Then look at another class; those who start in life with principle for their guide, and a sense of responsibility. How does this condition of worldly good affect them? Is it favorable to the culture of the religious sentiment? Is it profitable to the advancement of the Christian character?

Do I not speak to the hearts and experience of many who hear me, when I answer, *No?* — Nay, brethren, I speak only according to universal experience, only in conformity to what we all have verified in our own brief life. It takes off our attention from ourselves, and fixes it on our lot. It renders us more regardful of our personal gratifications, comfort, and appearance, in the world, and less regardful of our character. It checks the operations of the Word upon our hearts. There is less *time* for reading the Scriptures, for private devotion, for thoughtful self-examination. How can one find leisure for this particular care of his soul, when he has so many more avocations than he had? Engagements multiply; business presses. He must maintain a larger establishment; he entertains more company; he must visit more places of amusement. If all this leaves him less *leisure*, it also leaves him less *disposition* for devotion. Hurried by cares, and wearied with pleasure, he has less and less *taste* for the sober enjoyments which once occupied him. Other books are better suited to the growing triviality of his mind than the Bible; and the light conversation of the festal party of the evening makes his bed more welcome than his prayers. How can his religious character grow? — rather, how can it fail to decline? Inquire of the man, and he will say himself, that, when at some leisure and thoughtful moment, he looks back upon former days, recalls the pure, tranquil, holy enjoyments of his retired meditations and spiritual exercises, he sighs to perceive how he has exchanged the angel peace of an humble mind, for distracting and dissipating pursuits, more exciting, but immeasurably less satisfying. He cries out, *O, that I were as in days past!* and wishes and longs to escape again into the serene region he has left. He feels that he is fast forsaking those graces to which the blessing

was promised; that in his mode of life he can no longer be numbered among the "poor in spirit, the meek, the thirsting for righteousness, the pure in heart;" and he mourns that he has lost a great blessedness for a little good. But this feeling is as transient as it is bitter. The waves of the world roll over him again, and, by and by, he gives himself up, with resolute abandonment, to its seductive delusions and bewildering thoughtlessness. So decidedly adverse to the spiritual advancement of man is a worldly life. Thus do "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

But there are other traits of the Christian character, besides those just referred to, which are almost equally endangered. A thoroughly worldly life is a trifling and selfish life. No one will look at the example of a thoroughly worldly man or woman and deny this proposition. Now, then, just in proportion as one approaches to this state of absolute worldliness, in the same proportion he becomes trifling and selfish, and consequently that condition of personal prosperity, which invites to worldly habits of living, tends directly to form a trifling and selfish character; tends to form a character whose views and purposes are narrow; a character which has no large sympathies; no generous plans of improvement; none of that enthusiastic looking forward to better things, that love of excellence, that desire of progress, which are the chief causes of moral advancement. Such a man lives upon trifles, among trifles, and for small purposes. God has given him great means of doing good. But he never dreams of doing good with them; he never lifts his thought so high as to realize that his treasures are useful for any purpose but his own gratification, and he throws them away in ostentatious equipage

or transitory enjoyments. He bears on his own person, in unnecessary ornament, what would educate a poor lad of talents, to be a blessing to his country. He consumes, in the lavish entertainments of a night, what would have rewarded a meritorious genius for some work of elegant art, have put bread to his starving lips, and joy in his despairing heart, and, at the same time, secured to himself a permanent gratification of intellectual taste, in place of the empty pageantry which perished as it passed. Meantime, the great essential interests of society, the cause of education, of virtue, of religion, dear to every mind that deserves to be counted rational, and for the purposes of promoting which wealth has been given to man, appeal to him for aid in vain. He cares only for himself; and thus he lives for himself — lives when he might have been a benefactor, and does good to no one; and dies — when he might have gone down to the grave leaving a name to be remembered by thousands — unregretted and forgotten; and appears at the bar of Infinite Justice, to render account for his talents — alas! to render none but of their utter waste.

This, I say, is the odious picture of the thoroughly worldly; and to this every one is approaching who has made earthly prosperity his idol. According to the words of holy writ, "they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

We have discovered, then, what are the circumstances, which, agreeably to all the experience of mankind, render great prosperity hazardous and ruinous. It puts the mind into a state unfavorable to religious culture and religious influence, and it exposes to habits of a merely trifling and selfish life.

But, observe, these are the *tendencies*, not the inevitable

results; and, therefore, when the disciples wondered at their Lord's exclaiming, "How hard for the rich to enter into the kingdom of heaven!" he set them right, by adding, "*How hard for them that trust in riches* to enter into the kingdom of God!" It is not the possessing them, but the confiding in them, which is dangerous. The evils to heart and character, which I have enumerated, are the tendencies, not the inevitable result.

No, brethren; where God tries by unusual prosperity, it is not a mere snare. The possession of extraordinary worldly advantages, on the contrary, may be the means of extraordinary virtue; for it offers opportunities for the exercise and discipline of virtues splendid in proportion to its perils. As the poet said of large cities, that they at once cause vice to enlarge itself with a ranker growth, and virtue to lift itself to more celestial proportions, so it is equally true of great individual prosperity; it furnishes the occasion of uncommon goodness and uncommon depravity, to which a more moderate station could hardly be subject. This is an important consideration, full of encouragement as well as admonition. Let those men ponder it well, who are rising in the world with such rapid strides. Every advancing step at which they rejoice, and which they celebrate, perhaps, as a new epoch of gladness, by some outward change of circumstance and show, is a new talent to be accounted for; a new power to be used, or thrown away, of doing good; a new temptation to be resisted or yielded to; a fresh advance in self-indulgence and sin, or self-denial and virtue. Rightly used, it becomes a moral and spiritual exaltation, at which the angels of heaven as truly rejoice, as when an *humble penitent* turns from his iniquity; for it is as truly an advancement toward heaven, in opposition to as real obstacles. Therefore it was that Jesus so

pointedly said, "*Make yourselves friends of the unrighteous Mammon,*" that is, the riches of this world, so that when they fail — as fail they must in death — they may cause you to be received into heavenly habitations.

This is a grand, encouraging thought for the prosperous and wealthy. Let it be dwelt upon, for the virtuous excitement it may give.

It is an unquestioned truth, as well as a familiar remark, that the middle station in life is the safest — neither poverty nor riches; neither signal prosperity nor signal adversity; and accordingly we find in the middling classes the greatest average of virtue and religion. Among them are the steadfast supporters of all good institutions, the men to be relied upon for the achievement of every desirable improvement in the moral and religious condition of society. Among them we find the strength, the security, the solidity and ornament, the pillars and arches, of our social fabric and our Christian institutions. Far from the debasements to which the poor are liable, on the one hand, and the profligacy to which the rich are tempted, on the other, they hold on their more even and steady course of sobriety and worthiness. And He who knows the weakness of man's nature has graciously placed the larger portion of his human offspring in this favorable lot; it being undoubtedly true that the greater part of those who are not included in it have been cast from it, less by the inevitable ordinance of Providence, than by their own uneasy ambition or depraved desires.

Yet, if we should ask for opportunity of *extraordinary attainment* in excellence, we should probably find it, not in this safe mean, but in one of the extremes of human fortune, where a fiercer battle must be waged with temptation, and a corresponding triumph may be won.

Hence it is that we are so much affected by the pictures of worth which we sometimes witness in low life, shining out with a pure and celestial radiance, from amid scenes of debasement and guilt. Amidst dark and comfortless cells, where hunger and cold are perpetual afflictions; where all that is disgusting marks alike the habitations and their inmates; where parents and children converse only in words of blasphemy and reviling; where the whole intercourse is that of ignorant brutality, and it is difficult to say whether the wretchedness be most deplorable, or the depravity most hopeless; there, where we see what man is, when left to the uninstructed passions and unsupplied wants of a merely physical existence, — even there, under all these disadvantages, we sometimes see individuals and families that have struggled out from all this ruin and pollution, and asserted the dignity of their being; in defiance of all the horrible exposure, have lived undefiled, patterns of integrity, industry, resignation, kindness, and piety. There are no more beautiful objects offered to our contemplation on earth. There are none who have reached a higher moral elevation, who deserve a more exalted and enduring fame. And, when you remember, brethren, that there is power given to men to rise up thus amid degradation, to which they seemed devoted, and become as holy angels of light, amid the very habitations of fiends, — then you want no further encouragement to carry on vigorously that excellent work of Christian love which you began, when you sent out into the abodes of the wretched your minister at large, to preach the gospel to the poor, and lead back to God his wandering and prodigal sons. May God bless his charitable labor, and send his grace to those who have known how to employ thus worthily the treasures he gave to their keeping!

Yet, brethren, it must be confessed, that, if it is an affecting and glorious thing to witness this triumph of man over the evils and perils of abject want, there is another thing, less often referred to, because, perhaps, less often witnessed, which is, if possible, yet more affecting and admirable; and that is, the triumph of human virtue, by the aid of high religious principle, over the more seducing and corrupting perils of affluence and abundance. I fear that as few of the extremely rich escape debasement and ruin, as of the extremely poor. Their corruption is of another sort, but is as real, as deep, as deadly; and alas! it comes in a disguised form, with voice of music and steps of grace, as the temptation came to Eden, promising to lift man to be a God, and destroying his character and soul, while he appears to be elevating and refining it. Now, then, under these circumstances, where every thing combines to deceive and mislead, if we see a young man resolute to keep the straight path; turning a deaf ear to Circean enchantments; giving heed only to principle; faithful to conscience; true to God; obedient to Christ; growing more devout, more disinterested, more exemplary, in proportion as the world would allow and expect him to become less so; if we see him living more for others, in proportion as tempted to live more to himself, and enlarging his means of life only that he may enlarge his beneficence, do good, and promote the purposes of the giver; then, I say, we have seen even a rarer and a nobler triumph than that we have admired in vulgar life. That man achieves a victory which few can rival, amidst difficulties which few can comprehend; and he stands out prominent among those illustrious heroes of the world, to whom earth owes her greatest good and on whom heaven shall bestow its choicest reward.

Such examples have been; may they find imitators here!

Let me end, therefore, as I began. Let the language of Christ, and the history and experience of all nations, be as a warning against the degeneracy which lurks amid the scenes of extraordinary worldly prosperity. Let us watch against the tendencies to irreligion and selfishness, which encompass the path of ease and enjoyment. Remember the degradation and ruin which overwhelm the soul of him who abuses the costly gifts of divine Providence, and the singular felicity and glory that belong to him who consecrates them all to virtue and beneficence, and only rises in goodness as his temptations multiply. What shall be the character and fate of the place in which you dwell, rushing as it is, with such appalling speed, to the stature and luxuries of her fallen sisters, it is not for us to determine or foresee. May a benignant Providence so bless her Christian institutions, that they shall avert from *her* the tremendous catastrophes of wickedness and ruin by which *their* closing days were darkened. But for yourselves, brethren, as individual men, — for those among you, who are leading and sharing this wonderful growth, — you have it in your power, whatever others may do, by your fidelity to principle and God, by vigilant culture of your spiritual nature, and adherence to the true purposes of life, to avert from yourselves all participation in the guilt and the disaster, if they come. Nay, the opportunity is offered you to win for yourselves a more distinguished virtue and felicity, than in an ordinary state of things could have been your lot.

Go, then, brethren, and do your duty. Thank God for what he appoints and gives. Enjoy it as men; use it as Christians; and never suffer "*the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, entering in, to choke the word and make it unfruitful.*"

SERMON XXIII.

THE REASON, USES, AND RESULTS OF DEFERRED RETRIBUTION.

ECCLESIASTES VIII. 2.

BECAUSE SENTENCE AGAINST AN EVIL WORK IS NOT EXECUTED SPEEDILY, THEREFORE THE HEART OF THE SONS OF MEN IS FULLY SET IN THEM TO DO EVIL.

THESE words direct attention to one of the chief reasons of the sinfulness of mankind. They announce an obvious and solemn fact, to the truth of which every heart and all experience bear witness, and to the importance of which, as a moral admonition, no considerate person can be insensible. Human beings, made for goodness, capable of goodness, lauding goodness, and declaring that they prefer goodness, are yet determined to do evil, because the bad consequences of evil-doing do not immediately follow. They commit sin, they abandon themselves to sin, not so much from settled depravity of disposition, or deliberate and careful choice, — having compared the various courses before them, and satisfied themselves that vice is to be preferred, — but because the immediate consequences of vice are pleasant to the taste, and gratifying to the senses, and flattering to the self-love, while its painful and disgraceful results are distant, and concealed, and, therefore, they flatter themselves, may not arrive. Deceived by this circumstance, men risk the future for the sake of the present, and, thus

beguiled, become entangled in, and accustomed to, and hardened by guilt, at which their souls once revolted.

Let me ask your attention,

1. To the consideration of this fact;
2. To some of the reasons for its existence;
3. To some of the uses which should be made of it.

1. Let us distinctly set before our minds the *fact*. As I have said, there is proof of it to be found in the familiar observation and history of all men. They act, they feel themselves to act, they acknowledge themselves to be determined in their acts, by a view to their consequences. Seekers after happiness, they take what offers it; they do what will bring it. Impatient for its immediate possession, they seize on the nearest gratification. This moment is all they are sure of, and this moment's felicity they will, at any rate, secure. This is the first impulse of inexperience. And it is long before experience teaches that what gratifies at the moment may, by and by, produce pain. The tempting food lies before the eye, and within reach of the hand; it is pleasant to the taste, and the indulgence of the appetite seems only a suitable pleasure of nature. It is only after a long period that torment in the limbs, and disease throughout the frame, reveal to us that too great indulgence is wrong. So, in the use of the intoxicating cup, the present indulgence is simply pleasant; there is neither madness nor death in it; the evil consequences, if any, are afar off; they are worth risking for the sake of the immediate enjoyment; *this* is certain, *they* are uncertain. And thus men are fooled on, day by day, to a repetition of sensual gratifications, merely because their ill consequences are distant, which they would shrink from, intuitively, if they were immediately to follow the act. If the languor of a debilitated frame or the anguish of severe disease, were to fall on

one the moment he had finished his injurious repast, — if bloating and trembling should seize him as he took the cup from his lips, — no one would be so mad as to incur the bitter penalty for the transient good. And so in other sins. If the slothful loiterer in his youth were sure to taste, every night, the bitter fruit of his folly, which he must taste in after years; if the fraudulent dealer were sure of detection the moment that he purchased his unjust gain; if the caluminator, the debauchee, were each certain to meet at once the exposure, and remorse, and shame, to which their baseness will at last consign them, — then it is manifest they would shrink from their iniquitous acts. It is "because the sentence is not executed speedily that their hearts are set to do evil."

2. But, secondly, since such is the fact, and since the existence of such a state of things is found to be often conducive to wrong-doing, allowing sins to be committed and disobedience to grow, — while obedience would have been secured and goodness induced by an arrangement diametrically opposite, — the inquiry is naturally suggested, how this fact is to be explained. "Why," it may be asked, "is the weakness of man left to such an unnecessary exposure? Why has not the gracious Father guarded his frail children against so imminent a peril? If he strictly requires their conformity to his will under condition of suffering for their vice, — if he affixes penalties to their disobedience at all, — why not put these penalties so directly before them that they shall have no chance to evade or escape — shall never be subjected to the deceitful thought that by their distance they may be avoided? Why not execute the sentence speedily in all instances, and thus restrain the heart from setting itself on evil that is its ruin?"

To this inquiry, which is certainly pertinent, it is reason-

able that satisfaction should be given, if possible. The reply is perfectly satisfactory to those who will remember the nature of virtue, and the purpose of a state of probation. There can be no virtue in imperfect beings without a state of probation; and probation in order to the production of virtue, is the purpose of this life. Whatever, therefore, would be inconsistent with this probation, would, on that very account, be inconsistent with reason and the best good of man. An immediate punishment of any transgression would put an end to all probation; would be wholly destructive of virtue, and therefore, instead of being desirable, would be, of all things, most undesirable. This is the general statement.

It cannot need many words to make it plain, and so to vindicate the present constitution of things. I will offer to your notice only two considerations.

1. In order to a rational and moral obedience on the part of a rational and moral creature, there must be opportunity to disobey. Where there is no liberty or choice, there is no virtue. Where there is compulsion, there is no virtue. To obey by force, is not to obey at all. To yield against one's will, is not to yield at all. For it is the yielding of the will, a willing, voluntary, cheerful acquiescence, which is the very thing that is essential. But a voluntary acquiescence, a willing, hearty obedience, never could be had, if every wrong act were committed under the certainty of an immediate punishment to follow. Obedience then would be mere compulsion; therefore not virtue. Doubtless the act would be avoided; but the question is, What would be the state of the mind? what the desire? what the will? The man might retain his base desire unrebuked, and his perverse will unreproved. That is, he might, in respect of intention and spirit, remain the very same rebellious, selfish, malicious

creature that he always was; he might even in heart grow more obstinately so day by day; become the more odious and vile at the core, for the very reason that it is against his will, and because, through mere apprehension of immediate suffering, he is obliged to keep his ill feelings rankling within him, till their festering irritation turns him into a demon. Yet, meantime, his outward act conforms to the law. There is no overt transgression; *that* is prevented by the perpetual presence of the threatening sword.

Human governments, indeed, are satisfied with observing and controlling the overt action only. Enmity and treachery, whilst only in the heart, are nothing in the eye of human law. The reason is, that the state seeks *order* alone, and not *virtue*. It is incapable, through ignorance, of ascertaining whether there be virtue in its subjects or not. It can recognize and take charge of nothing but the external order. But the omniscient and perfect God, whose eye is on the heart, demands virtue, and cares little for any outward appearances, unless accompanied by an obedient mind and a willing heart. Hence it is plain that human law can gain its end by a speedy retribution; the speedier the better; for nothing is to be done but to prevent disorder. But the purpose of the divine government would in this way be defeated, since it would leave no time for the great moral motives to have their influence; it would take away from love, gratitude, generosity, and the other high principles, the opportunity of showing themselves, and reduce the whole character to the dominion of self-interest and fear.

2. From all which it becomes evident, — and this is the second consideration I proposed to offer, — that, in such an economy, there would be no tendency to the formation of that holy character, without which there is no permanent happiness. For what is character? Not certain actions. Actions are not character. They help us to understand a

man's character, but they do not constitute it. That is constituted of his state of mind, temper, dispositions, principles. A good character lies in regulated affections, and right dispositions and principles. It is love, purity, truth, honor, meekness, filling the soul, and shining out from it in a beautiful life. But all these are voluntary; they are matters of choice and preference; they cannot be compelled. They are also matters of thought and deliberation. They must have room to display themselves; they must have time to operate in; and there would be neither room nor time if, the very moment any error was committed, they were cut short by a penalty executed on the spot.

The fundamental principle, the living soul, of a powerful character is faith. But faith, too, acts deliberately, and with consultation. Its very nature implies waiting; trusting when it cannot know, believing in promises which are long delayed; relying on what is distant, invisible, inscrutable. Its worth and efficacy depend upon its capacity thus to wait, patient, active, loyal, rejoicing, though the promise long delay and Providence be wrapped in mysterious darkness. But there would be no scope for such a confiding state of mind, or the character it forms, if there were no delay of retribution, and all mysteries were excluded by sudden judgments.

And so of true happiness. Happiness results from character. It is the consequence of character, and is colored by it. True happiness comes only from the true character. It grows out of faith, holiness, and love. Without them it cannot be; and, therefore, any method of Providence which should leave no room for the exercise of these high graces, would leave no opportunity for securing the real happiness of the soul.

From all which it is plain, that the difficulty suggested

by our text is the inevitable concomitant of a state of moral preparation, and is essential to bring about its grand result. You complain of it, and would have it removed. But consider what you would substitute in its place — the fear of immediate penalty. For the thousand various and beautiful motives which God now employs to move, invite, and make worthy, you would substitute one, and that the lowest of all — the dread of the immediate execution of the sentence. That you may get rid of the danger of falling under temptation, you would change the order which treats you as rational children, into the tyranny which should drive you as a slave. You might thus escape the commission of crime; but with it you would lose the opportunity of virtue, and make happiness impossible.

The uses to be made of this doctrine, therefore, are two: the one, of lofty moral excitement; the other, of solemn admonition.

If the state of things which we have been considering be as has been represented, an essential characteristic in a world of moral discipline, then we should use it as such to affect our habitual mode of action and state of thought. It should decide our whole rule of conduct. Appearances should be of less worth. The present should be of light moment. A calm trust in something deeper than appearance, and beyond the present; a devout reliance on principle; a serene faith in the invisible, the future, and the eternal, should establish within us a comparative indifference about the immediate consequences of what we do; should cause us to regard with equal unconcern the prosperity which comes from wrong doing, and the adversity which attends well doing. Both adversity and prosperity are superficial and evanescent, not therefore to affect our repose or sway our actions. This is the state of mind which

should be habitual and fixed. This is the steadfastness of faith. This the peace of the full assurance of hope.

But it is chiefly with admonition that our subject addresses us. Like all other men, *we*, too, are tempted to evil by the false security of delayed retribution. We, too, brethren, in our several places, are likely to go on in our favorite indulgences, blinded to their injurious and mischievous character, because we do not clearly discern their ill consequences. One is sure there is no harm in his amusements; and another none in his idleness; a third finds none in indecent talking or profane wit; a fourth counts his falsehood, and a fifth his fraudulency, and a sixth his impurity, to be safe practices, because as yet they have brought no misèry or shame; and who knows that they ever will? In our moments of sober reflection we are amazed at the obstinate infatuation of sin; thus secure, thus self-complacently persisting, when every day brings to light terrible tales of vengeance delayed, and retribution postponed, only to come down on the thoughtless delinquent with the more inevitable ruin; and when, also, though the guilty might escape the righteous judgment of God even till the grave closed upon him, yet the divine government, and all the divine attributes, and the deep misgivings of the human soul, and the warning voice of human nature in all things and all times unite to attest that his doom shall follow him into the unknown future, and inevitable retribution prey upon him in eternity. And yet we go madly on, as if the experiment never had been made; as if nothing beyond the moment had ever been known; as if the apostle had not reminded us that one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day; as if Christ had not warned us that the summons shall come at such an hour as we think not; as if health and sickness, life and death, Providence and the church, were not full of

daily, hourly voices to alarm and dissuade us; as if our eyes had not seen examples of the fulfilment of these divine warnings!

I have seen the young man, in his hot ambition and self-confident strength, give himself up with intemperate zeal to his favorite pursuit, — perhaps study, perhaps business, perhaps pleasure, — refusing the care of his body, and scorning the admonitions of prudence and friendship. The sentence against which they warned him was not executed speedily, and he persevered, till, at length, the day of retribution came, and his abused constitution gave way, and he either walked through life an enfeebled, inefficient, baffled, suffering, disappointed man, or sank into the grave through a premature decay.

I have beheld a young man in all the loveliness of beauty and all the promise of genius, the idol of affectionate friendship, the expectation and reliance of parental love. He allowed himself to taste the cup of pleasure; he accustomed himself to its exhilarating draught; it seemed to him but harmless indulgence, and he smiled at the graver friends who cautioned him against it. He *knew* that it did him no injury at first, or he should feel it; and, when the injury had actually begun, he had grown incapable of feeling it, and, therefore, still argued that it had not come. And so he was beguiled, till his genius was dimmed, and his beauty grew haggard, and his tastes depraved; and, when the long-delayed sentence was executed against him, it found him a loathsome vagabond in the street, and appointed him his burial from the house of the pauper.

I stood, as a minister of Christ, where I was called to speak the words of his truth and love, at the bedside of a departing fellow-being. I had seen him living as the world lives; content with the measure of goodness that the world

allows; enjoying what the world's wealth can buy; and no one knew that he had sacrificed for it the integrity of his soul; that he had purposely stifled his religious convictions, and devoted himself to sense and Mammon. He lived on in the false security of worldly prosperity. His long-abused conscience had ceased to upbraid him. He had sunk into the deceptive quiet to which custom always leads. Little did he imagine the tenor of the sentence against him, which, after so long delay, his conscience was to utter in the calm hours when he lay waiting for the dying struggle — how it should torture him with the memory of his unfaithfulness, and tear him with agonizing remorse. And then I saw — and you that have not seen can feebly imagine them — the terrible struggles of the spirit in the storm of its self-reproach, which could not look back without shame, nor within without shuddering, nor forward without despair; which could have no mercy on itself, and dared not hope for mercy from God. O, there is nothing in all the calamities of life to compare with the horrors of such a death-bed!

And yet there may be one spectacle even more deplorable than this — that of the hardened and determined transgressor, who is beyond even the grace of remorse; who cannot, even if he would, feel the burden of his condition; and dies in brutish unconcern, regretting nothing, believing nothing, hoping nothing, fearing nothing; but speedily to awake to the reality of that unutterable judgment, which, because long delayed, he stupidly defied.

And all these, and all such, were beguiled against their reason, against experience, against warning and conscience; yet beguiled by the delusive hope — hoping against hope — that the sentence which was not executed speedily would not be at all.

Let us lay no such corrupting delusion to our souls. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God; but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God."

SERMON XXIV.

THE FACILITIES AND THE HINDERANCES TO A RELIGIOUS LIFE ON THE PART OF THE SCHOLAR.*

COLOSSIANS III. 23.

WHATSOEVER YE DO, DO IT HEARTILY, AS TO THE LORD, AND NOT UNTO MEN.

ALTHOUGH this injunction is addressed by the apostle to a particular class of men, it is evidently applicable in its spirit and power to all alike. It asserts the universal rule of religion, — repeatedly enforced in the New Testament in various forms of speech, — that, in order to true virtue and divine acceptance, man must act heartily; not grudgingly, not by compulsion, not because he fears punishment; but from the heart, from the right disposition, cheerfully, from principle. The inward impulse is to give its character to the act and the life; and this, in the devout spirit of obedience, from a sense of responsibility to God, in conformity to his will, — not as to men, for the sake of their reward or good opinion, from motives of interest, or policy, or human regard alone, — but with a religious mind, that refers itself always to something above man and the earth, and acknowl-

* Preached in the chapel of the University at the commencement of a collegiate year.

edges, as the only sufficient and ultimate standard, the mind of God. "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

Here, then, is obviously the grand law of human duty and responsibility. Here is, in short compass, the *directory* for human character and life: human life is to be ordered by *hearty principles*, and with *absolute reference to the will of God.*

The consideration of this topic may not unsuitably occupy our thoughts to-day. The recommencement of our duties in this place, with acts of religious worship, naturally invites us to examine the principles on which we are living, and the plan of life we are pursuing. It is the beginning to all of us of a new year. It is to some the date of a very marked and momentous era in their existence. Not a little of our fidelity and success in duty may depend on the frame of mind in which we now reassume the march of life or make a beginning here. If we are wise, we shall desire to enter on this period thoughtfully; clearly observant of what our obligations are, and so distinctly resolved about duty, that we shall not be left to the circumstances or accidents of our position to determine what we shall do and what we shall become. In the prayers of the season we supplicate a blessing from Heaven: let us, in consistency with these prayers, reflect by what manner of life we may attain the divine blessing; and seek that there be no want of harmony between the desires we express when we appear before God, and the acts we perform in the world.

With regard to the law of character and responsibility stated in the text, there are circumstances in the situation of a congregation like this which render its application in some measure peculiar. But the law is universal, to all alike applicable; and it is only by considering, first, what is

demanded of us as human beings, that we can arrive at any satisfactory apprehension of what belongs to us in our peculiar relation.

Now, when we observe what man is and how he is placed, we perceive that he has a *twofold concern* upon earth; the right use of his present being and the due preparation for a future. These two cannot be separated. The *right* use of the present *is* a preparation for the future; there is no preparation for the future with a wrong use of the present. The two are inseparable. The man who would be faithful can lose sight of neither. If he say, "I will take care to use the present aright, and then the future will take care of itself," it may be confidently replied to him, "You cannot do this; you cannot discern the right use of the present without the aid of light from the future. It is but a part of the great whole; it is not possible to apprehend it aright, to know justly its character, purposes or value, except by seeing it in connection with the whole future." The reason, the great reason, why such multitudes misunderstand, misuse, abuse the present, is almost solely, that they take it by itself, without reference to its proper connection with the future.

He, therefore, alone is wise, who recognizes this great fact, and conducts himself accordingly; who in all things has regard to both; who is true to his nature by cultivating it with this understanding of its immortal properties; who is true to his opportunities by making them serve his virtue now, and prepare him for virtue hereafter.

This is the religious man — he who, understanding his position in the universe aright, his relations to what is and to what shall be, and his accountableness to the great Source and End of all, orders his whole life with a regard to them; and makes every thing secondary to duty. Conscious of

his immortality, and knowing God to be the supreme good, he is impelled, not reluctantly, but of his own choice, heartily, to do all things as to the Lord, and not as unto men. *This is religion* — this voluntary and entire subjection to God, in heart, will, and action. *This is religion;* and, as I have said, it is obviously *the law of human life and character.*

So it has always been regarded, in the opinion of all the wise in all ages, by the testimony of all nations and all times. Religion is the law of human life, the one chief obligation of the human being. Hence have its institutions been honored in the laws of all people. Hence teachers, and prophets, and bards, have expounded and impressed its authority. Hence ambitious men have pretended a divine right, in order the better to impose it on society. And hence, in order to fortify the weakness of man, the Son of God was sent with words of grace and truth to persuade and guide men in this chief affair of their existence.

Thus, in the view of God and of thinking men, the whole progress of life is to be conformed to the divine law, and preparatory to a future. Any other is a false life; that is to say, any life but that which is guided by religion, is false and vain. Whatever, therefore, may be the pursuit to which any man is trained, whatever the object for which he is educated — whether his lot be to work with his hands for his daily bread; or to direct the labor of others in the counting-house or the state; or to cultivate his mind in retirement, as a philosopher or scholar, — in any diversity of situation and calling, there is still one central point in which all must agree; the ultimate duty, the controlling principle, must be the same in all — *to do rightly the present work, and rightly prepare for the future;* the moral obligation, the religious responsibility, is the same to all, and is the principal thing to all. "Fear God and keep his command-

ments, for this is the whole duty of man." The facilities which some possess toward this end are greater than those of others; but the obligations of all are equal. Each class, and each individual, has its own difficulties, temptations, struggles; but the law to each is the same, the great result the same, *the right completion, that is, of this life's work so as to be fit for the next.*

The question, therefore, is a momentous one for every class of persons, for every individual. What are our facilities, and what our hinderances? Let us know the advantages and the disadvantages of our peculiar position, that we may know what to do and what to avoid.

This is our inquiry to-day. Bringing home the principles now laid down to the peculiar life of the scholar, let us inquire what are its special facilities and hinderances in the way of the formation of a religious character and the accomplishment of the end of our being.

What are they? and how to be met?

If they belong to his position, let us first observe what that position is.

It is distinguished from that of all other men in this — that it is a *life of thought and contemplation;* of mental action. Withdrawn from the ordinary occupations of the visible life, apart from drudgery of the hands and mechanical toil and the ingenuity which employs itself on the forms and the changes of material things, he retires into his apartment, and shuts his door on the throngs and noises of the vulgar world, and busies himself with what is past, and invisible, and abstract. He is acquiring knowledge, comparing opinions, conversing with the thoughts of men that lived thousands of years ago, or thousands of miles distant; filling himself with the discovery of abstruse science, or the wonders of natural history, or the manners of various tribes

of men, or the inventions of the poets. Thus he enlarges his whole nature by acquaintance with all knowledge; gives his mind power over itself by exercise; obtains command of his faculties, and adds to their strength by habits of careful use. Other men are immersed in the immediate cares of the passing days; the culture of their minds is casual and incidental. But with the student this culture is a business; not the business of a few scattered and stolen hours, but the charge of his whole time. Their acquaintance with philosophy, truth, history, is just so much as desultory and immethodical reading may furnish them with; but he dwells with them always, and knows them by systematic and familiar study. And thus it is his privilege to be devoted to that method of life, which directly, and of set purpose, favors the enlargement of the mind, the discipline of its powers, and the acquisition of knowledge.

So far, therefore, as religion is connected with the operations of the rational mind, and demands investigation, thought, meditation, a spiritual self-command, so far, undoubtedly, there is an advantage in the position of a student. He can sit down, hour by hour, and day by day, to the study of the sacred Scriptures, — investigating with close scrutiny their sense, applying the laws of philology and philosophy to their interpretation, — and thus arrive at a profounder, more certain, and more satisfactory knowledge of them. His mind is at his command, and its attention does not escape from his grasp. Hence he can abstract himself from the immediate scene around him, and, in secret meditation, pursue the thoughts of things deep and invisible. In acts of worship he can govern his thoughts; by his habitual power over them, can keep them from wandering, direct them steadily to some perception of the divine presence and glory. But all this is less easy to the unaccustomed mind. It has been

used to work with visible and material objects; it finds it hard to govern its thoughts, hard to abstract itself in prayer; and only by a severe effort does it so far succeed as to execute any tolerable process of self-examination and contemplation — so unsuccessful, oftentimes, as to be unsatisfactory, and to leave only pain behind.

The minister of religion, who has been much conversant with the religious experience of his fellow-men, has heard, from multitudes of the most serious and conscientious in active life, sore lamentations of this inability to command the mind and fix its powers; this want of the power of consecutive thinking and undivided attention; this discouraging wandering of the thoughts, even in the house of God, and at the foot of the altar. The self-condemnation of these scrupulous Christians is sometimes agony. But from this source of pain the habitual student is relieved. To intellectual exercise he is accustomed. He may meditate, pray, contemplate divine truths, never distressed by this mental imbecility. So far, then, the situation of the studious man is favorable to the religious exercise of the mind; obstacles which lie in the way of other men are removed. Devotion may be to him an easier, and, therefore, let me add, ought to be a more exalted, engagement. More separated from vulgar interruptions, more conversant with the things of the mind, he is invited, prompted, to reflection on the truths which pertain to the Infinite Mind. Living in view of the wonders which are opened to his knowledge, and among the lofty thoughts which are perpetually stirred up within him by the words of inspired and uninspired men, he ought to be prompted to a more acceptable adoration. If his study be not an oratory, and his desk an altar, he is more disobedient to the invitations of grace and truth than any other man. You may excuse the poor man, who is

destined to stand all his days at the forge or in the factory, and who is too wearied at night to do more than eat the crust he has earned and hurry to his bed, without any companion to converse with more favored than himself; you could excuse all those whose engagements lie wholly among material things, occupied in nothing but to buy, and sell, and get gain, if they rise to no heights of religious fervor, and are ignorant and low in their religious culture. But for him who *dwells* among the wise and holy, to whom no hours of corporeal drudgery take away the pleasure and activity of thought, for him no apology can be offered, if he limit himself to ordinary knowledge or low sentiments in things divine. Much has been given him of capacity and opportunity, and much must be required of him in virtue and piety.

Yet it cannot be denied that what is thus favorable in the student's life to religious cultivation, is mingled with circumstances of a different character. Obstacles and temptations are in his way, different from those which beset other men, but not less severe, and tending to make his life, like that of all men, a *scene of probation.* Some of these must be pointed out, in order that, while we realize the obligations upon us, we may not fail to be on our guard against the difficulties which beset us.

1. The first of these circumstances, worth mentioning, is this, namely, that, in the life of study, study is apt to become as strictly and simply a matter of business, as the occupations of a business man. The man of letters in his library may be employed among his books in precisely the same spirit as the merchant in his counting-room, or the mechanic in his shop — merely in doing the day's task.

This may become to him, as to any one else, the spirit of his life; a matter of routine, with no reflection or sentiment

beyond that which belongs to the immediate hour. Every scholar is aware of a tendency to this, springing from the operations and laws of habit. If he allows himself to give way to it, he will find it a substantial hinderance to that thoughtfulness of mind and ready excitement of feeling which are requisite to a religious state. This, therefore, is one unfavorable tendency to be guarded against — the tendency to turn the intellectual occupation of his life into a mere routine of dry task-work, to be done mechanically, instead of heartily. Against this we should especially warn those who are as yet in the condition of pupils; whose course of study is laid out for them by others, and is likely to have little interest to them beyond that of some future, distant, and unappreciated advantage. Let them avoid, as far as possible, this natural proneness to look on every exercise assigned them as merely a piece of business to be done. Let them excite themselves to an interest in it as so much important knowledge, so much valuable truth. Let them love it accordingly, and take it as the welcome nutritive of their minds. In this way only can the *love of intellectual pursuit* be cherished. In the other course it would be quenched. Under a mere *task*, the mind does not grow, and the heart withers. Never do any thing as a task. Take it in a higher and more lovely character. Take it, as you take your daily bread, with appetite, with pleasure. Take it as a portion of the great allotment of divine Providence, by which you are to be trained and perfected. "Do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men." In this way a thousand of the cold and dissatisfying feelings which crowd a course of compulsory education will be dispelled, and a uniform state of sober enjoyment will take their place; and, what is especially to the purpose, in this way the growth of the religious character goes hourly on, and the life of the

student becomes part of the life of heaven. The impediment which threatened to hinder, and which does hinder many, is turned into an instrument which aids the great end of human being.

2. Another unfavorable circumstance in a life of study may be thus described. In other affairs, a man leaves his own dwelling in order to pursue them. He goes to his place of business, accomplishes the day's work, puts it aside, and returns then to his house — *another* man — changes the scenes and the associations. There is something favorable in this fact to a peculiarly religious occupation of the mind. If not borne down by excessive fatigue, he enters his apartment with a free, disengaged mind, which may find pleasure in turning its attention to so different and so much higher classes of subjects, which would be ready even to fly to them. But the student has been all day in the same apartment, at the same desk, his mind exhausted with strong action, and now, at the day's close, asks for rest, and not for intellectual excitement. Religious study, instead of the entire and welcome change that it is to the active man, is but a continuation of the very occupation which has been all day engaging him. It may demand, therefore, an unusual effort to resist the lassitude and the longing for repose, and give the hour that is due to the higher duty of the soul. Hence, therefore, we gather the instruction, that this higher duty is not to be postponed till the day is closed, nor even thrust into a certain allotted hour alone. Let the whole day be holy. Let *all* be done unto the Lord. Let praise and prayer be perpetual. There must be seasons specially set apart for this duty: he that seeks to live without them hazards his devotional and moral life. But they must be appointed for moments when the mind is fresh and the spirits are unjaded; and the scholar, for the rea-

sons suggested, will find them worth most in the *midst* of his daily cares, and not at their close.

3. Another difficulty in the way of the student's religious culture is to be found in the abundance of intellectual fare amid which he lives, and the consequent temptation to occupy much time in reading for entertainment — the temptation to amuse his mind with light works, rather than to apply it severely to stern studies. The state of letters, and the profuse issue of the press, render this a serious trial, concerning which warning should be loudly uttered. More new books are published every year than make up the whole extant libraries of Greece and Rome. The larger part of these are works of imagination, mostly frivolous. The scholar feels that it is necessary to keep up with the age, as it is called; and the fresh covers which lie on every table beguile him to take here a little and there a little, till, by and by, his habits of steady application are injured, and he has little taste for any literature but that which amuses. Many a promising youth has been in this way irretrievably injured within academic walls. He comes up from his early home, where books perhaps were rare, and no time had been allowed for any beyond the prescribed list of standard authors suited to the first days of study; he finds himself in the midst of an endless profusion of all that days past and days present can supply, without adviser or guide beyond his own desire to know what others know and read what others are delighted with. He seizes volume after volume, as they accidentally present themselves. Thus he is soon the victim of an irregulated and insatiable taste, which devours without order or object; and, at last, comes out to life unformed, unstrengthened, and unready for the severe work for which he should have fitted himself. This temptation it is a great duty to resist. Let the eyes of every one be opened to it, who intends that his years of ed-

ucation shall make him a man. Otherwise, no scholarship grows up within the halls of a university more than within those of a circulating library.

But the point to be aimed at here is, the injurious effect of such a habit upon the religious character. It is a serious impediment in the way of religious self-command and the indulgence of a devout turn of mind. The *general* remark holds true here, which asserts that any indulgence in known wrong is adverse to a religious spirit. He who gives way to this taste for frivolous reading is all the time *conscious* of doing wrong; his conscience accuses him daily of frittering away time, misusing talents, wasting precious opportunities, and enfeebling his mental powers: yet he still yields to the pleasing temptation. What chance has a religious habit of mind with him? He is unfitted, by this very enervating indulgence, for the enjoyment of any high religious exercise of mind — not only *unfitted* — the false and feverish excitement in which he lives has *indisposed* him to it, and, unless the admonition of conscience excite in him the resolution to break away from the temptation, he becomes its inevitable victim, and purposely gives up his religious improvement, that he may find temporary peace. Serious books and serious thoughts are only a perpetual reproach to him; and he flies from them, to absorb himself in the unreflecting luxury which he loves, sacrificing his moral strength to this poor and perilous gratification. There can be no doubt that, by this process, the Spirit has been quenched in many minds that once glowed with the honest desire of all right and heavenward improvement; just as in other walks of life the unwary have been led astray by the gay company of the trifling and the alluring displays of fashionable pleasure. No duty can live in the midst of *dissipation*, whether of society or of the solitary chamber. Religion is a duty, and the self-indulgence which turns life

into a scene of amusement, be it in the city or in the college hall, with dice or with books, is the deadly foe of that religion which is the chief duty of man. "He that liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth." The present time is squandered without honor or reward, while nothing is done to prepare for, but every thing helps to unfit for, the inevitable and infinite future.

There still remain other circumstances to be noticed, in order to a full view of our subject; but they must be left till the afternoon. Let us pause for the present with the reflection, that, while religion is the great law and ultimate interest of every human being, *every thing* in our situation and habits, of every sort, is capable of being regarded in a religious point of view, and must be so regarded by him who would faithfully discharge the present, and prepare for the future, as an accountable creature of God. This is the position with which we start, under the sanction of the text. To this we refer every illustration of condition and duty which is brought forward. Religion consists of two parts—*the knowledge and the practice.* No man is excusable for ignorance in any degree beyond what the necessity of his situation imposes upon him. If the situation of the student opens to him special facilities for knowledge, it, for the same reason, requires of him fidelity in practice. If there be peculiar temptations and impediments unknown to other men, so, too, there are peculiar means of avoiding and resisting them. The mind, like the body, grows strong by contention with obstacles; and he who has been permitted to enjoy great advantages for the cultivation of the mind, and yet has lived a life of moral and religious ignorance and neglect, unimproved by his privileges, unstrengthened by his trials, can expect nothing at the end but the reproaches of his conscience and the condemnation of God.

SERMON XXV.

THE FACILITIES AND THE HINDERANCES TO A RELIGIOUS LIFE ON THE PART OF THE SCHOLAR.

COLOSSIANS III. 23.

WHATSOEVER YE DO, DO IT HEARTILY, AS TO THE LORD, AND NOT UNTO MEN.

I OBSERVED in the morning, that these words obviously suggested the great law of human character and life; viz., that man is to live in hearty and cheerful conformity to the will of God; to do every thing as to the Lord; and that not of compulsion, but voluntarily, and with holy delight. This rule, I said, is to be sacredly applied to all of human existence, to direct man in that right use of the present, and that right preparation for the future, which constitute the whole business of earth. He who does this is the wise and religious man, whatever his occupation in the world may be. He who has done this has accomplished the true end of life, whether his lot have been high or low, and whether his fortunes have been successful or adverse. This, therefore, is the consideration to which every thoughtful man will have supreme regard; since, if the great end of life be not gained, all else is vanity and loss.

I proceed to apply this truth to the life of the student, and

to point out whatever facilities and obstacles therein exist, in regard to the prosecution of a religious character. I have already specified some of the peculiar advantages which it affords for the study and just apprehension of divine truth, and for the cultivation of those principles in the understanding, on which all true knowledge and practice are founded. I have also described some of the impediments which exist in the circumstances of the scholar's life, and some temptations belonging to his situation, which need to be guarded against and resisted. These were, 1, the danger of being beguiled by habit into a dull, mechanical routine, without life or love; 2, that of the intellectual tasks of the day crowding out all direct moral and religious exercise; and, 3, that of being tempted to ruin mind and heart by indiscriminate indulgence in reading, as an entertainment. Without recurring more minutely to the lessons which were thus taught, I now proceed to point out other circumstances of disadvantage and temptation, arising from the fact that a literary life is *not a life of action*, and therefore tends to give birth to some habits of life, and to some habits of mind, which are greatly prejudicial to a right character and religious growth.

1. *Some habits of life.* — Being separated from the world, as has been said, and his business being a certain pursuit of intellectual truth, apart from the affairs of men, the student is likely to become ignorant of common affairs, and the habits which belong to those engaged in them. Those laws, for example, of regularity, punctuality, economy, and foresight, which are so needful to be observed amid the engagements of society, he is likely to be thoughtless of; so that it has always been remarked of studious men, that they know nothing of the world; that they are unfit for society; that they know nothing of business; cannot take

care of themselves. Undoubtedly, confinement to study, and absorption in letters, possess a tendency to the formation of precisely this sort of character — an injurious tendency, because an evil character; therefore to be deliberately guarded against. Why should the best habits of intellectual life be accompanied by bad habits of social life? Nay, however much any of us may feel ourselves reproached by the remark, yet must it not be said that these bad habits of social life, by which the exclusive student separates himself from the customs of common men, are, undoubtedly, to a certain extent, *immoral and irreligious?* He is under the same obligations to men and society that others are; and to shut himself from them, as he does, when, by refusing these virtues, he refuses to live with men on equal terms, is as truly a dereliction of duty, as for them to do so. No class can fairly consider itself exempt from conformity to those modes of life on which the comfort and order of social life depend. The obligation is one imposed by that great Being who formed society and its laws. To be unfaithful to them, is unfaithfulness to him, and therefore irreligious. We may do it thoughtlessly, from the power of early habit, too incautiously formed; but still we ought not to do it, and the habit is pernicious. Irregularity, want of punctuality, thoughtlessness, and the kindred infirmities commonly attributed to men of genius and of books, just so far as they are indulged, weaken the moral power of the man, and impair his capacity for religious growth. It is essential to religious growth, that a man have power of *self-control,* and exactness in discharge of even small duties. He that is faithful in little, it is, who will also be faithful in much. But he who, because of engagements of mind, contrives to escape the demands of the minor morals of common life, how shall he hope to be able to acquit himself faithfully of

any great obligations? How shall he find himself equal to the greatest, who has been willing to take no pains to be equal to the least? Let those who yet have their habits to form bear in mind this caution. Let them observe, from the first, how puerile is the plea of talent or study to excuse any inadaptation to the little or the great vocations of life; and let them know that, by indulging it, they set a stumbling-block in the way of any great moral progress, and of all religious perfection.

2. *Some habits of mind* I was to specify also, in the same connection, as peculiarly liable to grow up in a life of study, and interfere with a true religious culture. What I refer to may be described as the *careless indulgence of the imagination*, on subjects speculative and merely ideal; whether in connection with important topics of thought, or only with one's own situation and prospects. It has been true of some men, that they lived a wholly ideal life; their existence was little else than a continued reverie. Undoubtedly, with such, it was greatly owing to a constitutional temperament, whose biases decided their character, and were not resisted. It is, therefore, necessary that men of such a temperament should be peculiarly on their guard. But the constant pursuit of letters endangers *every one* in some degree. So many hours of every day, spent in reading and meditating on things which are not present to the senses, which are only present to the mind; on persons and scenes which the imagination must imbody; on science, perceptible only to the intellect; and poetry, intelligible only to the fancy; — so many hours thus spent every day cannot but leave their impress, and, unless counteracted by real scenes in real life, may fix the whole mind in an ideal state. It may soon become more delightful to sit and muse on the visions which the philosopher and poet have brought

before him, or to follow in reverie the fancies which have been started about future possibilities, gorgeous hopes, floating and shapeless promises, sublime speculations, and airy nothings. Who cannot testify, from experience, how much more delightful to sit or roam doing this, than to turn from it when the mind is kindled, and force the attention to the objects of the common world, and what then seems the hard drudgery of common duty? It is a temptation lying in the way of religious self-government and improvement of character, which all must guard against. He that would fulfil the obligation which God lays upon him as a rational and accountable being, must always be awake to the duty of the present moment, and fitting himself for the duty of the future. But nothing can be named more inconsistent with duty, more alien from the purpose which God would answer in the human character, and which Christ would promote by his doctrine, — the sober, beneficent, active virtue, — than this self-indulgent exercise of the mind. It is mere self-indulgence. It is voluptuousness. It is effeminacy. No strong virtue, no high principle, can coëxist with it. The very object of intellectual culture is defeated by it. That object is to fit man for real life; this unfits him; and when he would worship the Father of his spirit, it takes away the fixedness of his attention, and his prayers are all dispersed in misty reverie. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. It should be enough to state this, to guard any sober-minded man against it.

It will be sufficient barely to mention another habit of mind, kindred to this, to which an intellectual life is prone, viz., that of *musing on duty, virtue;* their obligation and their beauty; their pleasures and their reward; laying plans and forming schemes for great acts of self-sacrifice and benevolence, when circumstances shall allow, and taking

to one's self all the enjoyment which such ideas afford, without the action which virtue requires. The student is very easily beguiled into this. His life, at present, is one of study and preparation only. But his natural instincts prompt to action. Every desire seeks gratification in action. He is not in a situation to carry out these promptings into real acts. He must content himself with imaginary acts. He plans what he cannot perform, and prophesies to himself fictitious scenes of energy — scenes for spiritual or philanthropic enterprise, or martyr-like devotion, in which he shall make himself conspicuous when differently situated. All this is very delightful; but it may also be very hurtful. Instead of strengthening, it enervates his virtue. For nothing is more true than the great principle of human nature, stated by Butler, that passive impressions, by repetition, grow weaker. Going over the theory of virtue in one's thoughts, talking well, and drawing fine pictures, so far from being favorable to a virtuous character, may tend only to harden the mind, and confirm it in insensibility. Let the student, therefore, beware of the temptation to indulge himself in musing on future acts of virtue, in improbable contingencies. The melody of the siren hours thus spent allures him to destruction. He gets the habit of satisfying his virtuous instincts with mere thinking and feeling. That habit will follow him into real life. He will there satisfy his pious spirit and philanthropy by thinking and talking, and will probably pass an inactive, useless life, with a heart full of good wishes, and head full of good plans, and his words full of ardent benevolence. Let him not indulge this pernicious habit. He has nothing to do with virtue but to put it in practice, in the duties of his own place at the present time. Then all such duties, and the regular performance of them with scrupulous and atten-

tive exactness, will do more to give him a true idea, and a real taste and love for virtue, and insure to him higher attainments in it, than the creation of the finest theories the world has known, or the most beautiful systems of self-culture and philosophy. The first would be action and character, the last only thought and feeling. Woe to that man, destined to appear at the judgment-seat of God, and give account of the deeds done in the body, who has spent a life of thought and feeling about virtue, without action and character to correspond — obliged to confess, at last, that he had mused on goodness so devotedly, that he had neglected its practice.

What has thus far been stated in these discourses is applicable to the case of all studious men, at all times. It remains to adduce a few particulars, more exclusively applicable to the members of the congregation I address, and to show what is their bearing on that great subject of man's religion and responsibility, of which we have been treating.

First, then, here is a community of young men, passing a few years of temporary retirement from the common affairs of life, that by study they may prepare themselves for the business of their coming years. Not only, as I described in the morning, is study their business, but, further than that, it is the business of the whole community in which they reside. None of their companions pursue any other; and this too, not in conformity with the institution of nature in the bosom of home, — in the presence of parents, amid the influence of kindred, in the sweet circle of brothers and sisters, — but severed from home, beyond the mother's voice, away from the sister's smile, apart from the brother's arm, where these domestic influences, which, in a good home, are the ethereal atmosphere of the heart, by which its lifeblood is designed to be kept pure and warm,

are wholly unknown; and in their place are substituted the uncertain, and perhaps capricious attachments of recent companions, and the guardianship of men who may exercise a father's vigilance, but who cannot possess a father's feeling, much less a *mother's love.* In such a community, the source of a thousand good influences; the training-place of great and happy men; the object of reverence and of affection to generation after generation of those who enjoyed its benignant care, — but which, nevertheless, is of necessity, in many respects, an unnatural condition, an artificial substitute for man's native home; — in such a community, the young man is to learn how to pass the time God has given him, and become ready for the account he is to require of him. Here he is to acquire that knowledge which shall give him power in the world, and that principle and character which shall raise him above the world.

No wonder, then, that to such a situation parents and friends follow him with pale faces and throbbing hearts. They are staking their all, as far as he is concerned, on the experiment. They are consigning him to a trial, as it were, by fire; in new circumstances; with new associates; away from the sacred company into which he was born, and amid influences whose character, and tendency, and strength they cannot adequately understand. But, with trustful hope in him, that he will not be so heartless as to distress them by ruining himself, and in that Providence which directs man to the best ends by the most trying path, they leave him in this new position. What shall he do? He must, first of all, study this new position, acquaint himself with its influences, and brace himself to use the good and resist the bad. The very separation from former associates, on whom he leaned, calls on him to make a resolute effort to stand by his own strength; to be his own adviser and governor; to

be steadfast to principle, and conscience, and truth; to appeal always to his ever-present Father in heaven, and thus substitute for the care and vigilance of parental love the religious sense of duty and the great hope of heaven. Rightly understood, this is a favorable position for the religious character. When separated from old friends, the heart easily tends towards Him who is the chief friend; when left to the strangeness of a new abode, it seeks spontaneously the sympathy of that only Being who has always been present to its thoughts and cares; and in the many solitary hours of the unaccustomed chamber, there is unusual opportunity and inducement to occupy the soul with meditation on the things that pertain to its nature and its destiny, with reading the words of eternal life, and with hearty prayer to the Father of all mercy. Happy they who avail themselves of these favorable hours, and so put themselves under that protection which alone is sufficient to all trials and all perils!

Again: the circumstance which next draws our attention is the process which must immediately commence of entering upon new relations of companionship, and forming new intimacies. Here is an exposure to great uncertainty. Much must be left to accident, as it were, and many perils of acquaintanceship be hazarded by the inexperienced and unwary. Who is to take the place of the brothers that have been left at home? Who is to take the place of the school-fellows and neighbors of years gone by? Is the young student to find a companion of like tastes and perfect sympathy, who will walk with him in the same path, and help him as he goes, and strengthen him in all his good purposes? Or will he fall, perchance, into the company of the frivolous, who will teach him to waste his precious hours? or, worse yet, fall into the hands of the designing,

who will artfully undermine his principle and basely corrupt his heart? Let him be on his guard. Next to a devout trust in God, and distrust in himself, let him distrust the friendly advances of the lovers of idleness and pleasure, who flatter that they may destroy, and who forsake, in the sad hour of need, the innocent victim they have beguiled. Let him attach himself to the resolute friends of duty, who will strengthen his weakness, rather than shake it; confirm his anxiety to do right, rather than laugh at it; and help him to stand strong in his place, in spite of ridicule and sneers.

In all companies of young men — how it is to be accounted for one hardly knows, but so the fact seems to be — there is a singular sensibility to the ridiculous and a tender dread of ridicule, which exercises a mastery over some, and is an annoyance to all. The merry and thoughtless spirit that turns every thing into a jest; that esteems it always innocent, if not laudable, to employ any words or measures for driving away care and lightening the burden of the day; these, for whom life has not yet furnished any thing serious, and whose overflowing cheerfulness of soul has not outgrown the careless glee of childhood — these find it difficult to understand that any thing should be exempt from their sportfulness, or any individual tolerated who will not join their humor; and so, without meaning any harm, without intending blasphemy, or deliberate unkindness, they make a war of mirthful play upon every thing serious, and turn into ridicule what ought to be held sacred; until some are driven by their raillery from what they know to be duty, and others are compelled to hold on the way of conscience and right, in the spirit of martyrs, to whom every day brings its cross. Let him who comes hither with a feeling that here he is to work out a portion of that human probation to which God ordains him, let him be aware that in this way

his steadfastness will be assailed; let him consider beforehand that he will be thus tempted. If, then, he will clasp his integrity to his bosom, and resolve to hold it fast, he will find the trial on which he enters serving only to strengthen him; his character will be the better for the ordeal through which it passes; and by the manly independence with which he adheres to the right, he will command the homage of every man's respect and confidence. The frankness and generosity of youth is never so madly thoughtless as not to honor the sturdy principle which withstands all efforts to shake it; while it despises, as heartily as religion reprobates, that imbecility in goodness which gives way before the jeers of the idle and worthless. Let no one, therefore, waver for a moment, or blush. Those that seek to shame him out of his purity or devotion will be the loudest to applaud his fidelity.

Once more: there is another view to be taken of this peculiar community, which discloses other influences on the character. Set apart as it is from the great body of society, having a sphere of relations within itself, not affected by the relations of society abroad, there grows up a public ordeal independent of the public opinion of the world, and a code of social morality different in some respects from that which prevails elsewhere. This is no place or time for a description of the state of things to which I allude, and which is sufficiently well understood. In this contracted sphere of relations, it is apt to be understood that duty to companions is paramount; that the laws of truth, even, are to give way to this. Reverence to superiors, fidelity to law, regard to the feelings and authority even of parents, are all as nothing in this competition; and thus a code of morals obtains, and a law of honor sways, such as men nowhere else acknowledge. This great peculiarity, always existing in such insti-

tutions as this, deserves to be examined by a *strong moral light*. It offers a peculiar trial to those who feel that every part of existence is a *portion* of human probation, and that none of it can be taken away from beneath the jurisdiction of Almighty God, and the obligation of his eternal law. To such persons, it may be a condition under which their spirit of allegiance to the right, being fiercely tried, may strongly grow. Let them so use it. Let them consecrate themselves solemnly to the right, come what may. Let the sense of duty — duty as seen in the wide and universal relations of earth and of eternity, — direct and sway them. Remembering that their witness is in heaven, and their record on high, let them "do all things heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

So, also, with regard to another peculiarity arising out of this separation from the mass of society. I refer to the circumstance that the current of human motive is somewhat changed.

Just so far as this state of existence departs from that which is perfectly natural, (as has been intimated,) just so far there might be expected some derangement in the order of motives by which in a natural state man would be swayed. Accordingly, we find the motives which arise from immediate comparison with our fellows — direct emulation and positive rivalry — more prominently active than in common life, and operating in different forms. Here, then, is a peculiar trial to the character. What influence shall it have on the character? Shall it mislead one to seek comparative, instead of actual excellence? Shall it so deceive one, that he will make less of the universal and all-embracing motives by which true virtue is engendered, and enfeeble the principles of final goodness for the sake of a present advantage? Shall he learn to seek honor, and not knowledge? Shall he

feel warranted in a selfish aim? In these words, I hint at moral hazards; hazards that must be run; but being triumphant over which, the faithful man makes himself strong, and advances in moral worth. He is willing to receive the allotments which belong to that period of life through which he is passing; but he knows them to be temporary, and of secondary importance. He remembers that he is still one of the great family of man, and not cut off from the wide circle of human relationship and duty; that he is soon to return to its midst, and he accustoms himself *now* to the motives and principles which should sway him there. He knows that nothing in his present condition absolves him, for an hour, from the everlasting obligations of truth, or his native allegiance to God; and accordingly he acts from the motives which they inspire, in the spirit which they inculcate. He is fitting himself not only for a profession, but for immortality; not only for the service and approbation of men, but of God; and he therefore does "all things heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

I have thus endeavored to state some of the circumstances in a literary life favorable and unfavorable to the religious character; favorable and unfavorable, that is, to the execution of the great trust of existence. It is not necessary to recapitulate what has been said, or to urge the importance of an earnest attention to the subject. We are all aware — and in words are not slow to acknowledge it — that religion is of the first consequence, and letters secondary. Yet, in our actual practice, we are likely to make letters first and religion second. The variety and fascination and excitement of literary labors and pleasure; the healthy and contented state of feeling which they induce; the delightful and honored company in which they keep us; the admirable uses to which they minister in improving and

adorning the world — all combine to render us satisfied with this as the *end*, when we ought to regard it but as one of the means, by which the end is to be attained. Brethren, when our judgment is right on the subject, let not our practice be wrong. Let not science, and philosophy, and poetry divert us from piety and Christ. Let not the very light in which we dwell be our condemnation. But, favored as we are, highly favored, with all that intellectual privilege, which, when rightly used, is the greatest aid to religious knowledge and the true elevation of the spiritual man, let us consecrate it accordingly. Let all our study be directed to help the moral perfection of our souls; and "whatever we do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

Let me especially recommend these views and exhortations to the attention of those who have just connected themselves with this seminary, and are worshiping with us to-day for the first time. Let me ask of them to lay to heart the great truths, at which I have aimed — that the law of religion is the supreme law of man; that the right use of the present, and the right preparation for the future, is the substance of human obligation; and that that life is false and vain which is not guided by a cheerful, hearty devotion to the will of God. Let them be entreated to enter this new scene of their labor and pleasure as *one portion of their religious probation*, on which not only their character in life, but their welfare forever, is in no small measure suspended.

My friends, we bid you welcome to a place amongst us; welcome to the privileges and enjoyments of a spot consecrated by the memory of many generations, and dedicated to the highest interests of man. We are glad that this welcome is first given beneath the shadow of the sanctuary, and before the altar of God. It is meet that here, in this

solemn place, on this holy day, the first voice of instruction should be addressed to you. It is right that your *first teaching* should respect your *first duty;* that you should hear nothing of the words of inferior knowledge until you had been reminded of the great end to which all is to be devoted, and exhorted to remember your Creator and nourish your immortal souls. This first, this midst, this last; this beginning and end of human education; this strength to the spirit; this guide to the conscience; this safeguard in all darkness, temptation, and delusion; this light of life, and peace in death; *this* is rightfully the earliest lesson you receive, mingled with the praises of God's house and the supplication for a heavenly benediction.

Thus do we welcome you, with these prayers and this exhortation, to the new scene of your duties. Thus would we persuade you, if we may, to go forward with hallowed spirit, with humble reliance on God, with stern resolution to be faithful to him first, and, through him, to all that he hath bestowed. God knows that, if you thus elevate your motives, you cannot fail. There is in your new relations, as I have attempted to show, much to favor and aid you; there is much also to try and thwart you. You do not enter them unwarned. You have been instructed to-day how to use them and overcome. Exert yourselves accordingly, and you will be triumphant. Take for your rule, from this day forward, the words of the apostle — "Whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;" and then, whatever trial or temptation you meet will be impotent to alarm or betray you; you will be superior to them. Discouraged you may be, but you cannot be corrupted. Misfortune you may encounter, but not disgrace. Others, seduced by the world, and insnared by their own feeble principle, will sink by your side, breaking the hearts of those

that love them, and making shipwreck of body and soul. But no friendly hearts will ache for you; no dishonored parent will hide his face when your name is repeated: your steadfastness of principle will have saved you, fitted for the trust and affections of all who love goodness, fitted for the favor of God and the inheritance of the kingdom of his Son.

My friends, let it be so. Take the vow to-day; here, before the echo of our words has passed away, while we are yet looking up for an answer to our prayers, take the vow within you, that, come what may, you will not be unfaithful. Will you not do it? Will any one hold back when so much may depend on the resolve?

And now, once more, welcome. May God bestow that light and peace on your new home, which shall compensate for the homes you have left, and lead you joyfully on to the eternal home of heaven.

SERMON XXVI.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE BIBLE.

ACTS VIII. 30, 31.

AND PHILIP RAN THITHER TO HIM, AND HEARD HIM READ THE PROPHET ESAIAS, AND SAID, UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST? AND HE SAID, HOW CAN I, EXCEPT SOME MAN SHOULD GUIDE ME?

In this question and answer, it is implied that in the Scriptures are passages hard to be understood, and which can be read only by aid of an interpreter. I suppose this is not contradicted, even by the Protestant doctrine, which makes *every man his own interpreter*. The difficulties exist, and are of such a character, that, unaided, no man can surmount them. It is in the choice and use of a guide that a man is to show his discretion and his fidelity. The Ethiopian nobleman happily fell in with a competent interpreter, and arrived at the truth. Every man cannot expect to be so favored. He may find guides on every side. If he take the first that offers, he may be well instructed, or he may be ill instructed. If he set himself deliberately to select from the crowd, he may select from wrong principles, or from imperfect information, and thus be greatly liable to be misled. To this alternative it would seem that the majority must inevitably be left. They are subject

to such guidance as circumstances may assign them, in the churches where they are born, or the community in which they dwell; and it is therefore a consolation to believe that no one can be accountable at last, except so far as he himself shall be blameworthy in his use of the means intrusted to him. The essential points of a devout and obedient spirit being secured, no error arising from the difficulties of Scripture can harm him. We are told, indeed, by Peter, that the "unlearned and unstable wrest these things, hard to be understood, as well as other portions of the Scripture, to their own destruction;" but, evidently, that is their *fault*, not their necessity. A docile spirit, content to be unlearned, stable in its purposes, would leave these hard things, and humbly rest satisfied with the clear and simple: then nothing would be wrested, and consequently no injury be incurred. And this is the spectacle perpetually witnessed among the lowly receivers of the divine Word, who take to themselves the portions they understand, and, troubling themselves about none of the hard questions that the learned raise, go on their way rejoicing — guided, comforted, saved.

But there are others whose situation does not admit of this. Their education and habits of thought are such, that they see the difficulties, and they cannot thus simply set them aside. They must do something with them. If not removed, they may be led to skepticism, and the rejection of revelation, or be left to a dissatisfied, and unhappy, and unsettled state of mind. There are not a few of this character. So far as they do not understand, they will not believe; or, if they cannot help believing, they will be joyless in their faith, just so far as they do not understand.

Now, of course, it is a very obvious remark, that neither of these states of mind is properly justified by the fact that

the subject is encumbered with difficulties. No subject of any sort is free from embarrassing questions — problems so difficult of solution, that men are perplexed by them. Yet it would be very unreasonable on that account to abandon a subject wholly, or to be discontented with what in it is clear. We always receive the clear and unqualified as so much established: what is less clear we solve if we can; if we cannot solve it, we inquire whether it is absolutely, in the nature of things, insolvable, or only insolvable because of our ignorance: if in the nature of things, then we conclude that we have no concern with the explanation of it, and dismiss it altogether from our thoughts, while the clear and unquestionable still remains to us, and we hold it fast; — but if insolvable because of our ignorance, then we remove our ignorance, if that be possible; if that be not possible, then we strive to be content with the inevitable ignorance; not casting away what we do know, because there still remain some things that we cannot know.

Precisely in this relation do we stand to the difficulties of the sacred writings. Some of them are easy to be cleared up. Those which are hard to be cleared up, are so absolutely, because of the nature of the subject, or because of our ignorance. If absolutely unremovable, — that is, beyond our reach in the nature of things, — then they are only such as we might reasonably expect in a subject of this nature — such as must be met when a finite mind would investigate what relates to the infinite. So far, then, from being a reason for rejecting the volume, the fact that there are difficulties in the Bible is one presumptive evidence that the volume may deserve to be received; that it is so far consonant to its pretensions; and, instead of being a reason for permanent dissatisfaction, is a powerful reason

for perfect contentment, because the investigation of the subject thus involved in obscurity is wholly beyond our powers. But if we perceive difficulties in the Scriptures which might plainly be solved with only a little more knowledge, within the compass of human ability to attain, then objection to them on *that* ground would be irrational in the extreme. We have only to apply ourselves more earnestly to study, and thus remove them; or, if we are not able to study sufficiently, then let the plain and intelligible doctrines we have learned, — which teach us humility, patience, and faith, as groundworks of Christian character, — let these be brought into operation; let us learn to be willing to remain uninformed, without throwing away what we do know, or allowing ourselves to be unhappy with the precious treasures which we have already derived from that celestial source of wisdom and virtue.

We are thus plainly led to two obvious remarks, namely, — first, the difficulties in the Scriptures, which pertain to the nature of the subject, to truths absolutely beyond the reach of a finite understanding, should be acquiesced in silently, and not be allowed to disturb our minds; and, secondly, difficulties which are such only to our want of information, and which we can see might be removed by further knowledge, should be made the subject of study, so far as opportunities allow. Let me say a few words on each of these points, and then inquire what inferences may be drawn from them.

1. The former class, to which I have alluded, will be found to comprise no small proportion of the difficulties by which many minds are vexed. They are impatient of whatever is mysterious. They expect to have every thing made clear to their understandings. They are not willing to allow that any thing can be true, except it have been

demonstrated to them by a process of reasoning, or exhibited by adequate illustration, so that they understand it. They open a volume of revelation, which professes to deal with subjects exalted and infinite; they expect it to make them all intelligible; they expect it to clear away for them all embarrassment, and enable them to grasp the unlimited and comprehend the incomprehensible. But that is no part of its design. God, eternity, providence, free-will, retribution, still have their secrets. Revelation does not tell them. It speaks of them, but always in words of awe and warning, not that it may give knowledge, which the human mind, after all, could not receive, but that it may give motive and excitement to holiness, which the human soul does crave. These persons are they, however, who crave not the holiness, but the knowledge. They would *know;* they would be on all these subjects as wise as God; and that volume which leaves the things unknowable by man, without teaching them, they turn from as unsatisfactory; refusing to take what it can give them, because it cannot give them every thing which they venture to demand.

But, meantime, the very circumstances which to such persons are repulsive, to the humble believer are occasions of edification. He says, "I do not expect to know all things. I am of yesterday. It is not at all strange that the providence of Him who is from everlasting eludes my comprehension. It is high as heaven; what can I know? deeper than hell; what can I do? Truth is an infinite ocean; what can a child of earth do more than just wet his feet on its edge, gather a few pebbles on its sands?" And with this thought grow up within him an habitual lowliness and reverence of spirit most favorable to character and happiness. He walks as a child. His temper is that of trust. Amid the wonders of the universe, he loves to

wonder. He would not, if he could, make all level to his own littleness of understanding. While every leaf, and flower, and insect, presents its crowd of marvels to his admiring thought, he is drawn to God, rather than repelled, by the inexplicable marvels that attend his larger providence and his revealed dispensations. He is drawn to Christ, not repelled, by the mingled atmosphere of light and darkness, in which he robed his spiritual teachings. So far from fancying that where mystery begins religion ends, he finds himself so enveloped and environed by mystery in common things, that he feels it good for him to take care that there shall be *no mystery without religion.* He cannot, on that account, reject Christianity; he cannot, on that account, be unhappy. He knows that where truth is infinite, and he is small, it must be as it is, and he dismisses the mystery from his anxious curiosity, in humble and reverential silence.

This is the dictate of nature and common sense no less than of religion. Man was made to submit and adore, as well as to understand; to admire, as well as to reason. In the province of reason, he is to yield up that noble faculty to nothing; to receive whatever contradicts her no more than what contradicts God. But every thing is not within the province of reason, and he will no more let her act the usurper out of her own domain, than he will yield her domain to any other power. If religion and man have suffered from superstition and fanaticism on the one side, they have equally suffered from logic, philosophy, and metaphysics, on the other. No greater wrong is done by trampling the understanding under foot, than by exalting it to an undue supremacy, and flattering it that it can know all things.

The Bible gives it no such flattery. While recognizing

its rights, its laws, and its responsibilities, in the fullest manner, it yet sternly checks all its arrogant pretence to be the only power in man. "Trust in the Lord," it says, "and lean not to thy own understanding;" and, accordingly, while man is so inferior, ignorant, and dependent, it continually and studiously exalts *faith* as his becoming attitude of mind and great virtue. It continually proclaims that it becomes man — since, in the unfathomable depths of infinite wisdom, there must be somewhat beyond the reach of "man, who is a worm, and the son of man, a worm" — that it becomes man, as a reasonable being, to whom the spirit of the Almighty gave understanding, to believe, to trust, to rely (without seeing it, understanding, knowing it) that all is right, just, good; that wherever, in the invisible or the future, there are operations going on, and truths developing, it becomes him to believe *his* word and promise respecting them, to whom the invisible is perfect light, and the future all unveiled; and never to doubt that, "though clouds and darkness be around him, yet that righteousness and judgment are the foundation of his throne."

In this respect, the analogy is perfect between the method of the divine Being in the dispensations of grace, and in the course of his providence. He hides himself, alike in both, from the understanding of men, and reveals himself to his faith. He does not explain his dealings, and requires us to trust them though unexplained. In providence we remark this daily. Life and the world are full of unexplained mysteries. Health and sickness; success and disappointment; prosperity and adversity; the long and happy life of some; the troubled, and changeful, and calamitous life, or the early death, of others; the vicissitudes of society; the changes of the nations; the progress and impediments

of knowledge, and religion, and happiness, — they are all but so many enigmas of the divine will, which we do not pretend to understand, but which we trust are all righteous and wise, because we trust the righteousness and wisdom of God. And this is the dictate of reason as well as of religion.

In precisely the same way, as I said, is the administration of the "kingdom of heaven" conducted. The analogy perfectly holds in respect to the doctrines of revelation. And reason there, also, demands that we trustfully submit to the words and doctrine of God, however unexplained to our understanding. As we do not see through either, so both are matters of trust with us — perfect trust — not because we perceive that the dispensation is best, and the doctrine true, but because he is perfect and our Father, and what he does, and what he declares, cannot but be best and true.

It would seem, then, to be but reasonable, and reasonable in the highest degree, as we thus receive in submissive faith the inexplicable dispensations of divine Providence, that we receive also, in a like submissive faith, the inexplicable declarations of divine doctrine. The one are no more strange, apparently contradictory to perfect wisdom and goodness, than the other. Anterior to experience, we should no more perceive that the inequalities of the human lot, the seemingly capricious destruction of human hopes, the unrecompensed visitations of suffering, are consistent with entire equity and benevolence, than, prior to experience, we should perceive the doctrines of revealed religion to be all consistent with true religion, and the teachings of a sound philosophy. We do not *see* it in either case. If we admit the one on the principle of faith, why not the other? Why not yield our judgment to that of the Father of light as implicitly in the one as in the other — in the

Bible as in life? In life we see, again and again, what we are called on to notice to-day — promises defeated, and expectations cut off, and affections mocked, and projects baffled — in a manner that, to the human eye, is utterly inexplicable. A young man rises amidst his family, beloved, trustworthy, an object of expectation, already beginning a course of usefulness and honor which opens the prospect of a serviceable and honorable life; and all at once he is cut off by death; the whole scene is changed, every purpose of his being, for which he seemed made, defeated. Can human wisdom explain this? Can the human eye see that it is just what it ought to be? that there is really no defect, no loss, no caprice, no deficiency of love, but all right, gracious, best? No, we do not see it. The reason cannot show how the apparent is not a real contradiction. But we believe it; we do not doubt it. Faith fully acquiesces; and, amid the darkness which can be felt, in spite of the mystery which weighs down the spirit, we confide in a wisdom and benevolence which we are sure cannot err or be unkind. We take it as the admonition of a Father, and bow beneath the rod. We take it as the warning of the great Disposer, and learn not to boast ourselves of the morrow, for we know not what a day may bring forth.

And why not, with equal readiness, take the divine instructions concerning infinite truth, and the great purposes of the soul? Why not trust that they are what they are declared to be, though they may not be perfectly coincident with the expectations of our understanding? Why, for instance, should we doubt the promise, that God will literally pardon the penitent? It may seem to us that there is a law of nature and the human constitution, according to which, every transgression goes on, and is visited, as an

inevitable consequence, by punishment, and that remission is impossible, because inconsistent with that law. But are we able to say that it is more inconsistent than certain dealings of Providence are with the divine character? It only *seems* so to us; but does our experience warrant us in opposing the surmises of our defective mind against the express language of the sacred Teacher? So, too, there is the express promise of answer to prayer. This, in terms, is the clearest doctrine and promise of the gospel. It presents exceeding difficulties to our reason, to explain how that doctrine can be reconciled with the general laws of the universe, and the action and freedom of our own mind. But why not here also remember that this is a subject out of the province of knowledge; that it is in the dominion of faith; and as, in regard to the dispensations of Providence, so in regard to this promise of grace, be willing to trust, though we cannot discern, that there is no real incongruity, and that God commends his own method of fulfilling his word by his own mysterious way?

These illustrations might be extended; but enough have been adduced to explain the important principle before us; enough to make evident the duty of dealing with the difficulties of revelation, as matters beyond the reach of our faculties, in the same way that we deal with those of Providence, — in the spirit of filial trust and humble acquiescence, — and therefore to be referred to Him whose knowledge and wisdom, no less than beneficence, are as unbounded as his presence and his power.

2. The second class of difficulties are of a different origin and character. They are such as exist only to our ignorance, and which disappear as soon as we are informed.

To some persons these are of the gravest importance, because they unhappily have not access to the requisite

sources of information. They are obliged to remain, therefore, in their ignorance; or, what is something worse,—because the source of superstition or fanaticism,—they resort to their own imagination for guidance, or take up the first exposition that is offered them by men perhaps as ignorant as themselves, or pledged to some party theory. Under such circumstances, the true light never shines upon them: they may, from the plain teachings of Scripture, which none can pervert, arrive at the Christian life; but so far as regards just knowledge of the passages referred to, they may be almost totally in the dark.

It may be profitable briefly to glance at some of these sources of obscurity, to show how they may be accounted for.

Some take their rise in the very nature and character of the sacred books themselves. They are very old books, and it is impossible that what was written centuries ago should not be affected so far with the circumstances of the times, as to be, in many particulars, strange at the present day. Customs and manners, modes of thinking and of expression, change; so that what was familiar, and therefore simple, to one age, becomes foreign and unnatural to another. This would not have been so, had it pleased God to send his revelation in the form of a digested system of truths, or code of constitutional law; then it could have lain in the form of abstract propositions, forever unchanged by the change of customs, or nations, or ages. But it did not please God to adopt this human method. He taught by example, by history, by living cases, and not by philosophical or ethical propositions; and therefore the changes of time, which produce changes in modes of living and of speaking, necessarily affect the ease with which his Word is interpreted. Moreover, the sacred books were also written in a distant country, and in a foreign language: and dif-

ferent *nations*, even of the same age, differ in modes of thought, speech, and living, quite as widely as different ages. All these circumstances are combined in the Scriptures. They must partake of the character which belongs to all books under similar circumstances. If it were not so, they could not have been written when and where they were. It is evident, then, that difficulties, having their origin in these causes, may be removed by information on these subjects. That the books have been transmitted down, by manuscript copies, from age to age, and brought before us under the disadvantages of a translation, would alone be sufficient to account for not a few of their obscurities. That in their construction they are so eminently figurative, dealing copiously in metaphor, allegory, and parable, not always plain to those who lived at the time; that the aim of the writer is oftentimes not announced, but left to be inferred, — to be inferred, too, from casual hints and incidental expressions, — so that one may long be in doubt whether he have succeeded in detecting it, and may, in the end easily mistake; — these are among circumstances obviously contributing to render interpretation difficult, and sometimes leave a passage in irretrievable darkness; especially in the epistles of Paul, for instance. In these are many allusions to circumstances, thoughts, arguments, known to himself and the party addressed, of which we can know nothing, and therefore we want the key which can alone unlock all his meaning. Any book on any subject, composed under such circumstances, would inevitably contain things hard to be understood. So far, then, from being ground of objection to the Scriptures, or occasion for doubt, uneasiness, neglect, it is a fact which speaks decidedly in favor of their reality and genuineness,

— should operate only as a stimulus to that inquiry and study which alone can do any thing for their removal.

I have thus hastily remarked on the two chief classes of difficulties specified — those, namely, which belong to the nature of the subject, and which our finite minds never can remove; and those which are difficult only to our ignorance, and which can be done away just so far as our knowledge is capable of being extended.

3. The difficulties we have thus far considered have their origin in the imperfection or ignorance of the understanding. Another class there is, originating in the perverseness or unbelief of the reader. As our Savior said to the Jews, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life," so still are there those who will not come to his gospel. The gospel is hard to them, because their disposition is to abuse it; their state of mind has no sympathy with it. "What concord hath Christ with Belial? what fellowship hath light with darkness?" Their tastes are so wholly for amusement; their minds so involved in business; their hearts are so intent on worldly and selfish ends, or their attention so absorbed in speculations and notions of their own wisdom, that they have no relish for, they cannot interest themselves in, the contents of the divine Word. It is vapid, foreign from their modes of conception. It clashes with their manner of life, is unaccordant with their pursuits. They cannot go along with its meekness, humility, self-denial, philanthropy. They exactly verify the description — "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." All their experience and preferences are so entirely animal, bodily, earthy, that they cannot perceive

the excellence and desirableness of what is moral, spiritual, heavenly. The truths and promises of eternal life they yawn over, as insipid and dreamy; and the precepts and descriptions of moral integrity and disinterested action they turn from, as fanatical, or senseless, or harsh: "they are hard sayings; who can bear them?" To such persons the New Testament is full of unintelligible propositions and strange mysticism. It seems to them to be unfit for practical men, to be unsuited to common life. It can become lucid and agreeable only when they have brought their hearts in tune with it, and become willing to conform their tastes and desires to it. Without this preparation of moral sympathy, the book is to them, what to a man of no scientific education are the great treatises of Newton or La Place — dry, harsh, inextricable: he turns from their pages with hopelessness and disgust. But to him whose mind has been properly trained, and whose habits and taste for scientific investigation have been cultivated, these intricate treatises afford instruction and delight. So to him whose heart has been properly trained, and whose habit and taste for religious meditation have been cultivated, the darkness of the sacred page disappears, and all becomes lucid and delightful. He has perfected his spiritual discernment, and what before seemed foolishness is now the wisdom of God.

There is, therefore, perhaps, no better aid to the satisfactory understanding of the Scripture than a devout state of mind. This is, in regard to God, what a friendly state of mind is in regard to a man. We well know how the feeling of friendship toward another helps us to understand him and enter into his views. Our interest in him, our knowledge of his character and designs, our acquaintance with his modes of thought and state of feeling, enable us

readily to catch his meaning, and gain a right apprehension of his intentions. Just so a devout spirit would facilitate our entering into the meaning of the Scripture. Our mind, being in sympathy with the divine will, would have affinity with divine truth; we should enter easily into the spirit and meaning of the word, just as we often take the full meaning of a bosom friend from a very slight hint, or even look.

This, of course, implies an obedient temper, a docile spirit, a willingness to learn, a desire to learn. In all subjects, how much does the facility of acquisition depend on this state of mind! It constitutes no small part of what makes up the aptitude or genius for a particular department. While the reluctant mind holds back, cold, sullen, uninterested, and therefore finds every lesson burdensome, and all progress a task, the willing mind progresses on, eager, enthusiastic; and difficulties disappear, and tasks are pleasures. This is especially the case in ethical pursuits and the acquisitions of religion. Before the movements of a docile temper, the intricacies of truth clear up, the hard ways of God grow plain, and a divine beauty breaks out upon what seemed harsh and severe.

This is the first practical lesson to be learned from our subject. The chief requisite to the removal of the difficulties ordinarily found in the Bible is a devout spirit and a teachable disposition. Many others may be added.

Thus we learn in what sense it is true that the Scriptures are easy to be understood, level to the minds of all — a way so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein. This is true of what is essential in order to acceptance with God and final salvation. Nothing can be plainer and less liable to be mistaken than the few great, all-comprehensive principles on which salvation depends.

The humblest need not mistake them. No mystery has ever crept over them. They shine prominent, distinct, clear, by their own light. As, in the march of the Israelite, through the desert, a thousand objects there might be to distract the attention and produce hesitation and doubt, yet always rose clear before him the pillar of fire and cloud, and he had only to direct his march by that holy signal and be safe; so the Christian pilgrim, amid the ten thousand perplexities which may at times darken his path, finds certainty and assurance in those distinct and essential truths which stand out unquestioned and undenied as leaders of the spiritual host. Elsewhere there is obscurity, but here there is none. Accordingly, it was said by Dr. Watts, "The difficult passages contain nothing essential to salvation: the most important are least obscure; and I hold it a very good rule," he adds, "according to the degree of importance is the degree of clearness. A dark passage is not important, because it is liable to be mistaken, and therefore an honest inquirer, being mistaken, might be lost."

Hence it will follow as a wholesome rule — *Make the plain portions of Scripture the interpreters of the obscure.* It would seem as if nothing could be more obvious, or more reasonable, than such a rule; and yet it is greatly disregarded. The method, too often, has been to plunge into the midst of the intricate passages and the darkest sayings; fix upon some meaning for them, and then come back to the plain passages and give them a conformable signification. But the more just way, surely, must be, to take up the declarations about which there is no doubt, and then construe the doubtful so as to agree with them. Common sense would seem to demand this course. And by pursuing it we should be far less liable to the danger of which Peter warns, of "wresting those hard things to our own destruc-

tion;" for, on perceiving therein perplexities, and beginning to be lost in their darkness, we should immediately recur to the infallible guidance of the plainer passages, and refuse to involve ourselves in any speculations which they would not make clear.

In this way Scripture would be to us the interpreter of Scripture, — the wisest and surest of all interpreters, — and we should be saved from the rock on which so many have split — the love of ingenious theorizing, and the pride of plausible criticism, in which men follow the suggestions of their own thought, and idolize their own fancies, and yet, because they thus arrive at an explanation of a difficult text, take it all for the illumination of heavenly truth. We shall escape this folly by making the clear passages our standard, and venturing no farther into the abyss of mystery than they can guide us. What a world of controversy and intolerance in regard to the Trinity and the Atonement, would have been saved by the universal adoption of this simple and reasonable rule — to take the teachings of the plain texts, and pursue the metaphysical and philological discussions only with the greatest meekness, and toleration, and reverential caution, farther than these plain texts give them light!

In connection with this, there is another valuable rule for the serious and practical student of the New Testament, namely: let him make himself so familiar with the plain and unquestioned, let him so incorporate into his faith its sound words, and so imbue his whole soul, intellect and affections with its clear and strong spirit, that he shall cease to care for the clearing up of the hidden things; that he shall come to live with a calm and religious indifference to them. This is a most desirable state to be attained. It is what may be called a healthful state. For assuredly, that eager, anxious, discontented, feverish, impatient state of soul,

which is forever vexed by its inquiries into the secret things of God; lost always in the wandering mazes of subtile disputations; unhappy because it cannot settle the great questions of metaphysical theology, or unthread and explain the unfulfilled prophecies which look forward to the end, — surely this cannot be esteemed a healthful state of soul; surely this is not that serenity and tranquillity which we should expect to grow out of the perfect trust, which belongs to the ignorant and relying child of the dust; which should characterize him who has learned not to be wise above what is written. Certainly we best conform to our place, we best recognize and exhibit the becoming spirit of disciples and children, when we so confidingly rest on what is distinctly taught, that, with unconcerned and incurious mind, we can leave all darker questions to the decision of the great Sovereign of time and eternity. We should make this our motto — "The secret things belong unto the Lord; the things that are revealed belong to us."

And this may serve to suggest to us some of the probable reasons why such obscurities are permitted in a religious revelation, and which, therefore, should make us content with them, as well as solicitous to use them aright. They are evidently designed as circumstances in our moral probation for our moral benefit — to be construed, then, always as parts of our trial, and to be used accordingly. Thus are distinctly vindicated the wisdom and goodness of their appointment.

In two points, more especially, their valuable purpose is evident; namely, as the discipline of faith and charity; — of *faith*, because thus we are left in a state of ignorance on many of the very points about which we are naturally most curious. Many of the first questions that men in general most eagerly ask are passed by unanswered, and, instead of

knowledge, we are dismissed with faith. We are not informed, we are told to trust God and obey. Men have always been asking, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" and they have never received but one answer — "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." And so of other similar inquiries. Thus our filial spirit of acquiescence is put to the test; it is proved and strengthened; and when we have thus learned willingly to cast ourselves on the divine wisdom and divine love, then we have attained that temper which best becomes earth, and best befits heaven, and which could in no way have grown up in the human heart so well as through experience of these peculiar trials. So, also, it is the discipline of *charity*. Under the present arrangement of the Christian dispensation, there is indefinite room for difference of judgment and variety of opinion. So wide is the liberty which the Master has left to his disciples, so little compulsion is there upon the human mind, that sentiments in religion may vary, and do vary, upon all but the few fundamental doctrines which lie at the heart of the system; so that every man may almost be said to have a creed to himself. Yet how dear and sacred to every man is this his own individual, private creed! What does he value, what can he value, as he values his own religious convictions? To him they are as if he had received them from the infallible breath of God; and to question, malign, or ridicule them is to question, malign, or ridicule the eternal truth of the Spirit, and commit sacrilege against the Savior of souls. But other men, all around him, look differently on these very holy things — perhaps do question, malign, or ridicule them. It is a trial of our charity. Will our love hold out against it? Will we literally allow them to exercise the same prerogative which we have exercised? Will we yet hold them to be brethren? It is the probation of our char-

ity. If it pass through it, well: then it is strengthened thereby, elevated, enlarged, and fitted for that future gathering of all believers in heaven, when love shall be as generous as the bosom of God, and wide as the boundaries of his infinity.

Finally, these various reflections may serve to impress on our minds this important condition as the final instruction — that the design of the Christian revelation is to make man better, not to teach him knowledge; to affect his heart, his conscience, and his will, not to enlighten his understanding; to bring about salvation from sin, not security from intellectual error. Little care has therefore been taken to prevent mistakes in mere matters of speculation; but those all-important points which relate to true character and acceptance with God are made so evident that they cannot be mistaken. Skilful interpreters need be only few; but *all* must be holy livers. We are to be less anxious, therefore, about the difficulties which encumber the interpretation of the Scriptures, than about the right reception of their spirit. This is the one thing needful. All that we have said, all that the Bible itself says of the study of the truth, and knowledge of things divine, — all ends in this; for though we have all mystery, and all knowledge, and faith to remove mountains, and have not charity, it profiteth us nothing.

SERMON XXVII.

PAUL AND FELIX.

ACTS XXIV. 25.

AND AS HE REASONED OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, TEMPERANCE, AND JUDGMENT TO COME, FELIX TREMBLED.

Felix was the judge, and Paul the prisoner standing before him: yet, lo, the prisoner speaks boldly, and the judge trembles at his reproof. Such is the majesty of truth, such the power of conscience! Felix was clothed in all the splendor and authority of Roman office, with ministers of life or death at hand, ready to move at his bidding. Yet he could not hear, without emotion, the reasoning of a man persecuted and accused, whom he might punish at his pleasure, and of whom he knew nothing, except that he spoke fearlessly. What a triumph to the humble servant of Jesus Christ, that the great of the world must forget their greatness before him, and feel like other men!

The effect of Paul's address upon this Roman governor is to be attributed to two causes — the nature of the truth he uttered, and the self-accusing conscience of Felix. Nothing can come to the human mind more grand, more moving, more appalling, than the mighty truths of the gospel; nothing more calculated to probe the heart, and stir its pro-

foundest emotions. We, who have been familiar with them from our childhood, can very feebly judge of their power upon one to whom they are for the first time plainly and forcibly presented. Such was the case with Felix. Educated a heathen, though he probably had learned something of the speculations of philosophy on the nature of good and evil, and a future state, yet it was very different from hearing the simple truth of God announced with authority by a man like Paul. From such a preacher it must have come with new power. It must have flashed upon his soul with a sensation of awe and astonishment, and, from its sublimity and soul-searching power, with which he was not familiar, must have filled him with terror. But this was not all. There was something in the truths presented to him which *reached his conscience.* The sense of guilt and sin aided their effects; and he trembled, because his life had been such a series of opposition to the laws of righteousness and temperance, that he found himself exposed to all the danger of a judgment to come.

Respecting Felix the Roman, the governor of Judea, we know not much. The descriptions of his character, which have reached us, show him to have been a bad man. Drusilla, who, we read, was at this time with him, he had shamefully enticed away from her former husband. It was not the only instance of the kind which had disgraced his life. With respect to his government in Judea, we are told that he thought himself at liberty to commit the greatest crimes with impunity, and exercised his power with every degree of cruelty and licentiousness. This was the man before whom Paul was standing. Doubtless the apostle well knew his character, his vices and his cruelty; yet he stood before him undismayed; and, when called upon to speak of the faith of Jesus, he so urged its essential articles, — righteous-

ness, temperance, and judgment to come, — that Felix, in spite of himself, must feel, and his heart make the application. But though his conscience was for a moment touched, no permanent impressions were left upon his hardened heart. He had enjoyed the pleasures of sin too long, and valued them too much, to be willing to give them up, and to suffer affliction with the people of God; and although he afterwards often sent for the apostle, and communed with him, yet it was only to obtain money as a ransom; and he died, at last, a wretched unbeliever, and went to the judgment of which the apostle had warned him, with his sins crying out against him.

Many remarks suggest themselves to the mind on reading this interesting portion of sacred history, to a few of which I shall confine myself, without regard to the order of their arrangement.

1. We are struck with the boldness and power of the apostle's preaching. A prisoner, in the presence of a despotic and powerful man, who had his life in his hands, and whom to offend might be instant death, and before the face of the very woman who was the partner of his crimes! — yet he forgets not that he is the servant of God, the ambassador of Jesus Christ, and he addresses them as guilty beings, accountable to God, at a future judgment, for their breach of his law of righteousness and temperance. He conceals nothing of the strictness of the divine commands; nothing of the terror of the divine authority; but, with all the strong eloquence of which he was master, pours forth the message of God, till the convicted magistrate shakes upon his seat. Such courage does virtue give to man in the presence of human power! and such a coward is the vicious, though he sits upon a throne! The old sinner has often shrunk from the rebuke of a child; and if we will

but keep our innocence, and wrap ourselves in the truth of the gospel, we shall never need to fear what man can do, or to shrink from the duty of reproof and advice to those that are gone astray.

2. Observe also the power of the gospel over man; and observe, too, in what class of truths this power lies. The gospel of the despised Nazarene, — who had been crucified with scoffing and disgrace before the eyes of a whole world, — uttered by the mouth of a Jew in chains, overwhelms an infidel and vicious ruler of the mighty Roman empire! and this solely by the force and authority with which it exhibits the simple doctrines of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. It is these doctrines, lying at the bottom of human accountableness, and coming near to every man's heart, teaching him that nothing is of so great consequence to him as his own character, his regard or disregard to the divine will, — it is this that constitutes the power of the gospel over human conscience. These truths we may wink out of sight; we may veil them by ingenious sophistry; we may drive them from us by a crowd of business and the intoxication of pleasure; we may bury them in a mass of doctrines and ceremonies; but they still stand firm, and constitute the power with which religion grasps the soul of man: and when, by the energy of preaching or the call of Providence, man's conscience is roused to think of them, and to compare with them his own life, then the stoutest and hardiest sinner trembles. So it was here. Felix sent for Paul to hear "concerning the faith in Christ." He was curious to know the principles of this new sect, the doctrine of this new philosophy. He probably ranked it with the old philosophical systems of the world, and would like to compare it with other opinions. If Paul had discoursed to him of abstract dogmas, and gone over the list of

intricate and metaphysical speculations, which some have preached to the world as the faith of Christ, Felix would have been entertained, and dismissed the preacher satisfied; but he never would have trembled. But Paul knew the gospel better; and the astonished magistrate, instead of what was curious and intellectual, found the new doctrine to be a doctrine of godliness; and, unprepared for reasoning that should affect his heart or touch his life, was made to feel himself accountable, and to tremble at his sins. And so with other men. It is vain to be profound in argument, and eloquent in illustration of abstract theories, and metaphysical speculations, and philosophical niceties, and dark doctrines; an angel might preach thus forever, and yet lead no man to holiness and salvation. These are matters which "play around the head, but do not reach the heart." But when you come to the plain, practical lessons of holy writ; when, by strong and urgent reasonings, you prove that God, who made and governs, requires righteousness toward all men, and temperance, i. e., self-government and purity, toward ourselves, and that this requirement he will enforce in a judgment to come, — when he shall judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has chosen, — then men feel that righteousness is something which concerns themselves; not a pleasant speculation, something to read about, to be amused with, but something which concerns their lasting personal well-being; then the soul starts, and looks around, inquires concerning its preparation for judgment, breaks off its sins, flees to God by the holy Mediator, and lays hold in earnest of the truths and consolations of religion. These are the powerful truths which break the stubborn sinfulness of man, and educate him for heaven. Every thing else the conscience can sleep under; every thing else a man may believe, or disbelieve, and still remain

easy; and so it has always happened that sinners have been found hardened beneath every form of mere belief. But when man is made to believe that he is accountable, that his life must be searched into and judged at the last dread day, then he can sleep no longer. The couch of down becomes a bed of thorns; and, though invested with all the power and state that earth can give, he trembles on the very seat of office.

3. This leads us to notice, thirdly, that right preaching of the gospel is that which keeps in view this great and fundamental truth of human accountability and a final judgment. If this be omitted, I see not how there is any religion at all — certainly none which is of any consequence to me. If God cares not for what I do in life, and will not make me answerable for it, I am sure no one else will; and therefore it is of little consequence what I do in life. I will spend it as I please, and vice is as good as virtue. If man be not accountable to God, there is no sufficient motive for good morals, and Felix ought to have set at defiance all reasoning about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. It is this truth which gives its power to all religion, and makes it practical. The practical instructions of Christianity form its glory and its strength. It is these which sanctify and save. It is these which have regenerated the world. It is these by which the apostles overturned the superstitions of the old world, and by which their successors still make sinners tremble, and lead the children of God to heaven. Without these, all mystery and all knowledge are vain, and deep speculations and heated zeal become unprofitable as sounding brass or tinkling cymbals. But with them, the most ignorant have knowledge enough, and the most simple are guided to paths of pleasantness and peace. If the conscience be not touched, if the heart be not sub-

dued, the life not reformed and regulated, all pretensions to religion are vain. And these things can be effected only by the power of its practical truths. Paul addressed himself to the *conscience* of Felix; not his imagination, nor his understanding, nor his affections solely; but primarily to his conscience — that is, to his sense of right and wrong, to that principle within which sits in judgment over man's actions, and approves or condemns, according as they are virtuous or vicious. This internal judge pronounced sentence against his unrighteousness and intemperance, and the magistrate trembled. But intellectual speculations in divinity or in moral philosophy, however deep and ingenious, can never touch the conscience, nor save the soul.

4. Hence we remark, fourthly, that the doctrines and truths of religion must be applied to himself by a man's own conscience, in order to their thoroughly affecting him. They may be familiar to the understanding; they may have excited the fancy; they may have moved the affections, — we witness this every day, — and yet, if they have not been applied to the conscience, they are quite inefficacious to make men better. Therefore, let no man imagine his duty is done, when he knows, believes, or even feels the value of religious truths. He must apply them to himself before he can be a religious man. Felix was so great a transgressor, that his conscience involuntarily made application of the apostle's doctrine. In spite of himself, he saw his guilt and danger, and shrunk aghast at the sight. But how many amongst us hear these truths repeated perpetually, and make no application of them at all! We read and hear the preaching of the word as we would study or hear lectures on any other subject. It is an important subject; it entertains and instructs us; but we go away, and forget that it is to be applied to ourselves. We sometimes apply it to our neighbors;

but we neglect to lay bare to it our own souls. But divine truth never will profit us, except we take pains to bring it home to our hearts, and make it touch our consciences.

It has, indeed, an inherent power for the sanctification of the soul; but it is the power of the physician's prescription; it can heal him only who takes it; and if we would understand why so many live in the midst of Christian influences, and yet live unaffected, we have only to remember how small the number is of those who make faithful self-application of them.

5. It is worthy of remark, fifthly, that a single application of the truth, however powerful, is not sufficient. Our conscience may be awakened, as that of Felix was, by the strong exhibition of God's word, and we may be deeply agitated and humbled; but let none think this enough; no, not even if this happen more than once, or frequently; nor even if he have pleasure in being thus excited, and love to be thus roused. Felix himself trembled; but what of that? The first thing he did was to say to the apostle, not, "What shall I do to be saved?" not, "How shall I flee the wrath to come;" but, "Go thy way; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee." How many, brethren, how many even of you, have done the same thing, and, when fervently impressed with the truth, as if God himself touched you, have let slip the golden moment, and quenched the holy fire, by waiting for a more convenient season! Felix, also, having been thus moved by the apostle, admired his eloquence, and afterward, we read, sent for him often, and communed with him. Doubtless Paul often pressed upon him the same subject, and Felix often felt the power of what he uttered. But he still waited for a more convenient season, and at last died in his sins. And other men do the same. They follow the preachers

of divine truth, and crowd to religious services, but, after all, put off their actual reformation. They will hear again, at a more convenient season, and thus are always learning, and feeling, and resolving, but never practise. I say, therefore, that such movements of conscience, even when one is pleased with having them repeated, should not be enough to satisfy him. He may still remain in his sins. He may still delay being religious. Instead of growing better, he may be growing hardened by the repetition of these impressions. Nothing, brethren, should satisfy any man, but to cherish the feeling of accountability, and make his faith abiding; to have his heart always humbled and affected, and every season a convenient season. His state is a dreadful one who lives on in a life of worldliness and habitual disobedience, and yet is contented, because sometimes the admonitions of divine truth affect him. It is madness to suffer these occasional visitations to take the place of that thorough reformation and earnest improvement which the gospel requires, and without which none can accomplish its purpose, or attain to its glorious end, even the salvation of the soul.

6. We see, in the sixth place, the danger of delay. Felix was alarmed and awakened, but not converted, because he waited for a more convenient season; and while he waited for this, death came, and he died unrepenting. So it has been, and is, with others. They know that they ought to leave their sins, and follow after righteousness; but they will wait till they can do it more conveniently. They know that they ought to break away from their selfish indulgence, and live temperately; but they will wait a little, till the self-denial will be more easy. They know that they ought to be prepared for the judgment which may arrest them, perhaps, to-morrow; but they will wait a little,

trusting to the chance that it may be deferred till they are ready for it. Thus, again and again, they postpone the duty, until the hand of death arrests them, and cuts them down with purposes unaccomplished. O, how different from the wise Psalmist! "I made haste, I delayed not to keep thy commandments." How different from the awakened jailer, who would not run the risk of waiting, no, not until morning, but *straightway* was baptized, and joined himself to the disciples — thus pledging himself before his feelings had time to cool, or his zeal to evaporate. This, brethren, would be wise in us, — to give the pledge while our hearts are warm, and our spirits awake — to bind ourselves by a vow which the world never after can break. But alas! we suffer the warmth of our feelings to pass away; we wait till our fervor has cooled; we defer till to-morrow the purpose which we ought to accomplish to-day, and so lose the precious hour. Then we grow indifferent; we relapse into worldliness; we design at some future season to begin our duty; but we let slip every hour that we are sure of; and while waiting, delaying, undecided, irreligious, we are called away to the judgment to come.

Brethren, will we suffer that hour thus to come upon us? Are we willing to be companions of Felix at that day? Shall we be satisfied, at last, to bring it forward as our apology, that we were expecting the arrival of some more suitable opportunity of serving God, than he had allowed us? Shall we think our *intentions* a good excuse for neglecting the great work of life? Then why wait for a moment? Is not every thing uncertain? Is not this a dying world? Are not men hurrying to their graves every moment? Why then wait? Delay cannot be sweet, while we know it may be ruinous. Irreligion cannot make us happy, while we know it is not safe. What can we do to

prolong life? what to avert calamity, or comfort sorrow, or soothe a death-bed? Alas, in all these things, where we most need a friend, irreligion treacherously becomes a bitter enemy. And can we, will we, delay an acquaintance with that which only, at such times, can prove our friend?

No; let us turn with abhorrence from the example of the Roman magistrate, and imitate the great and good man who was his prisoner. He, when persuaded of the truth of the gospel, hesitated not a moment to embrace it. He kept by it perseveringly through a life of severe trial, and found it a guide, a friend, a comforter, in the most difficult seasons. Thousands have since found it the same. Many of you have found it so too. It has given you support and peace when the world spoke only of despair. It has enabled you to be happy in spite of the heaviest afflictions which flesh is heir to; and is teaching you to look forward, without dismay, to the hour when darkness and death shall come, because it inspires you with hope of that world where God shall wipe all tears from all faces, and pain, and sickness, and sorrow, temptation and sin, shall no more have place.

How can any man hesitate to lay hold on this peace? When godliness hath promise of the life that now is as well as that which is to come, how is it that any will unwisely choose ungodliness? How can one be content, for a moment, to forsake the ways of righteousness and temperance, when he knows that there is a judgment to come?

O my brethren, let us so live, that we may not only not tremble when some earthly preacher reasons, like Paul, of righteousness, temperance, and judgment, but may even hear without dismay, or guilty shrinking, the summons of the trump of God, when it shall call us to the bar of heaven.

SERMON XXVIII.

HARMONY BETWEEN THE DOCTRINES OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AND BY WORKS.

JAMES II. 24.

BY WORKS A MAN IS JUSTIFIED, AND NOT BY FAITH ONLY.

ROMANS III. 28.

A MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WITHOUT THE DEEDS OF THE LAW.

These two sentences seem, at first view, to declare contradictory doctrines. If a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law, how can it be true that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only? The doctrines, however, may be shown to be each true in itself, and each in perfect harmony with the other. It is by no means strange to find in philosophy or history a superficial opposition where there is a radical agreement — an apparent contrariety where there is a real harmony. Such is the case here. I propose briefly to explain the doctrines of justification by faith and by works, and to show how it is they form parts of one and the same great truth.

The former doctrine will be more easily understood by us if we first give our attention to the latter. The doctrine of justification by works is laid down by St. James, in the chapter from which the text is taken, with great simplicity and force of argument. Without works faith is dead, and,

being dead, cannot profit. It is no better, than that benevolence which expresses good wishes to the naked and hungry, but *does* nothing for them — leaves them hungry and naked still. And when Abraham, set up from the oldest time as the great exemplar of effective faith, gained of God the testimony and honor of being called the *father of the faithful*, — why was it, except that he did the works — he obeyed? And as with him, so with all, — we see that by works is a man justified, and not by faith alone.

Let us attempt to unfold this principle, and display it in its practical application.

1. And, first, we see how that by works a man is justified, *because it is thus determined whether he have faith.* This is precisely the reasoning of James. How do you know that Abraham had faith? By his works. In what other way could it be made known? He might have asserted it, professed it by formal protestation; but that could not answer the purpose. For when we recur to the history, we find that the whole question before him was a practical one. His faith was put to the trial — the trial, namely, whether he would still believe and trust God, notwithstanding the mysterious and apparently ruinous consequences of his commandment. The patriarch had received the divine promise that his son should become the head of a vast and illustrious nation. But now he is commanded to take that same son and slay him on the altar. He knows that both are from God — the promise and the command. He cannot reconcile them. The trial, then, is — will he trust when he cannot see? or will he follow his own judgment, and disobey? Will he go on confidingly, like a docile child, not doubting that to the Father there is a way to make all clear? or will he take on himself to accuse that Father of a manifest inconsistency, and withdraw his trust, and follow,

as a higher light, his own judgment? In similar circumstances, how many have done the latter! The race of men — even those among them who desired to do God service — have always been prone to imitate their great first progenitor, who listened to other suggestions, rather than the divine will, and allowed his reason to contradict his faith, and so disobeyed and was lost. This is the tendency, to forget how short-sighted is our reason, and how fallible is our judgment, and follow these as the safe guide, rather than the written commandment. Not so the patriarch. He knew that God could of the stones raise up children to Abraham; he was willing to wait the clearing of the mystery by the wisdom of Providence, and stepped forward to obey the command. No profession could have done it — no words, no devotion, no sacrifice, though it had been of all his herds: there was no adequate test but that of the work; and the work justified him, for it proved that he had faith.

2. We see how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith alone, because it is thus determined whether he have *piety;* and without piety, no man can be justified. Piety is the right state of the mind toward God. He is the pious man who cherishes the sentiments of reverence, affection, trust, which belong to the relation he sustains toward God. Evidently, therefore, this is a great and essential duty. He must be judged unfaithful, in a large measure, who fails here. It is, in fact, the essence of what Christ has named the first and great commandment. But how is it to be known that he has piety? By his prayers? Prayer is an expression of piety — a natural, necessary expression of it. A devout man cannot be without it. But it does not *prove* his piety, since we very well know that one may, for a pretence, make long prayers, may be very punctilious,

sanctimonious, and hypocritical. By his sensibility, his readiness to be moved, the throbbing of his pulse, the trembling of his lip, the filling of his eyes? This sensibility is very well, and, to men of certain temperament, is an indispensable accompaniment of piety. If they could tremble and be affected on all other subjects of interest, and be unmoved here, it would be a deadly sign of condemnation against them. But, then, all men, even if they have devotion, are not so made as to give it this expression; and those who *are* so made may have the emotion without real piety. This excitability of the feelings may be wholly transient and superficial; it may also be altogether independent of any other trait of character, which evinces regard to the Deity.

How, then, is it to be determined that a man has piety? God indeed knows, as he knows all things. But how shall the man himself know, and how shall his fellow-men know? How shall *he* determine, if, through self-deception, neither the ardor of his emotions, nor the punctiliousness of his prayers, will of themselves satisfy him? And how are his *fellow-men* to judge, if the signs of feeling and profession are insufficient? *By his works.* They alone can put beyond contradiction the testimony of other signs. They alone can be a warrant to himself against the deceitfulness of his own heart, or an assurance to others that the signs he sets forth are signs of substantial reality. The daily works of his life; the consistent deeds, which evince, by their uncompromising adherence to duty, that the will of God is his law; the whole works of his whole life — no less a part of the homage due to God, than the sensibility of the affections, and the hours appointed for worship — these are the only indubitable, incontrovertible evidences of his piety.

3. We see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone, because thus it is to be determined whether he have *benevolence*. This is the second great command, and like unto the first. He that does not observe it is far from the kingdom of God. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love is the fulfilling of the law." A man would, therefore, fain keep this commandment, and know that he keeps it. How shall he know it? how ascertain that he is a man of benevolence? *By his works*, undoubtedly. Not but that a man, from some sinister motive, may do deeds of benevolence, and yet be any thing but a benevolent man; that is a matter well understood; but a benevolent man cannot be such *without* benevolent deeds; and all other signs and arguments that he is so, fall to the ground, if these be not added. There are persons who wrap themselves up in well-devised sentimentality, and speak, and look, and write, with the tenderness of the most pitying sympathy: sensitive to suffering, they weep at every tale of woe, and exclaim with energy against all oppression and injuries of men. Take them at their word, judge them by their tears, and they are all philanthropy. But shall we so take them? Shall we so judge them? Shall they be so deluded as so to judge themselves? Look at them — at their actual self: what are they doing? how are they living? In pomp, in luxury, and self-indulgence, they loll away their easy existence, and no sufferer is relieved, no victim of oppression unbound. The dwelling of poverty never smiles at their presence; the table of the destitute is never supplied by their abundance; they *say*, "Be ye warmed and filled," but give them not those things which are necessary or comfortable. And therefore it is that St. John says, "Little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in *deed* and in truth." It is only by his deeds

that a man can know himself or another to have true brotherly love. By his works was it that Howard showed his philanthropy, when he exhausted life in that great circumnavigation of charity; by their works that Fenelon and Borromeo, among the Catholics, and Oberlin and Luther, and thousand other noble spirits, among the Protestants, showed themselves to be lovers of their kind; and neither on earth nor in heaven could their record of immortal honor be what it is, if they had wrapped themselves up in the contemplative faith of sentiment and reverie; breathing sighs and shedding tears of sympathy, thinking to be justified by their brotherly love without works.

4. We see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith alone, because in no other way can he have *self-government* — can he hold a mastery over himself, his thoughts, imagination, temper, appetites. If they govern him, he is lost. It is essential that he keep them in subjection to himself. And how is this to be done? Is there any way but by works? Is there any way by which he can subject to himself all this unruly and rebellious company of selfish and worldly desires, without strenuous activity, without even hard and continuous toil? You may say, indeed, that they are to be subjected by the power of principle and supremacy of conscience — and very justly. But is it principle or conscience, active or inactive? lying still, or industriously laboring? and if active, what is that but the working of the man? His principles will not stir themselves to oppose and put down passion, lust, and ill propensities and habits, if he himself do nothing: it is by his own works, by his own activity, that principle acts. It is vain to aim at self-government without action. And this may be illustrated by a thousand familiar instances. One may be so placed, for a long season, as to flatter himself that he has perfect com-

mand of his temper; no angry word has escaped him, no angry emotion disturbed his mind; but let an unexpected occasion come, and he will find that it is only by acts that he can be proved. So of envy, malice, and other malevolent sentiments. Do you know that you are free from them? Are you sure that, in regard to all these, you are self-governed? It may be so, while you are not called upon to act; but when the time for action arrives, and appeals to those base feelings within, you may find that they were only sleeping, and are still unchained, and that by nothing but by actual works can you determine whether you possess self-control or not.

It is not necessary to proceed farther. The assertion of the apostle is fully illustrated, beyond all question, by this reference to each of the several great departments of human and Christian duty. In regard to all, it is plain that, without works corresponding, it never can be determined whether a man have faith, piety, charity, or self-government; nay, more, that, in the present constitution of things, it would be to most men impossible to obtain either, in any adequate measure, except through the medium and by the aid of good works. For, indeed, principle, if not allowed to express itself by the acts to which it naturally prompts, becomes discouraged and dies. Sentiment, if not permitted to come out in corresponding deeds, languishes and fades. Action, work, is the very element of their existence; and in the man who does not and will not work, their growth is impossible. You may say that, as portions of the immaterial existence, as pertaining to that soul which alone is thinking, spiritual, immortal, the principle and sentiment are chief — all in all — while the deed, being related to material and perishing agents, is but secondary — is valuable only as it is an expression of the moral man

within. You may say this, and plausibly; and on this idea is founded that great doctrine of *justification by faith*, which is the immortal twin of this doctrine of justification by works. You say, therefore, what is just. But do you not observe that, so long as the material and immaterial, the corporeal and spiritual, are indissolubly joined as in human nature, it becomes impossible to make this severance of the principle from the act, without destroying one or both of them? The sentiment longs to shape itself into action — to become a work; just as the seed longs to sprout into a plant. Persevere to refuse to either this longing, and it perishes. The life is in the seed, but is good for nothing unless it develop itself in the tree. The life is in the principle, but is good for nothing unless it develop itself in the act. Therefore "faith without works is dead." Therefore love to God, love to man, and personal purity, without works, are but names. No man can have them except as he allows them to show themselves in action: and therefore we see how "*by works a man is justified.*"

Our inference from all this is, that nothing can be more idle and irrelevant than the opposition which has sometimes been made between faith and works. It shows simply a want of right understanding of the whole ground. It betrays very partial and one-sided views — views which have led to fanaticism and bigotry, and the disorders which fanaticism and bigotry always produce. We must look at the whole ground; and we shall find that these two celebrated parties in ecclesiastical strife, instead of being jealous and deadly rivals, are to be regarded as intimate fellow-workers, drawing life from a common fountain, and both perishing if a fatal wound be given to either.

We learn, also, that great lesson of religion — *Be doing* — Do something — Act — Work. We can become noth-

ing, can gain nothing, if we refuse to work. God has made most affluent provision, has implanted impulses, principles, sentiments, in human nature, which lie there as perennial fountains of bliss; and no labor of ours could avail any thing if dispossessed of them. But neither will they avail unless we labor in accordance with them. Salvation and heaven are offered on no different condition. The dispositions and habits of soul essential to the enjoyment of heaven can be attained in no other way. If you would have living faith, therefore, be doing. If you would have piety, do. If you would be benevolent, have self-control, *do.* If you would have the salvation and heaven to which they lead, DO. As Paul, the moment he was awakened to the Christian faith, cried out, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" so let it be your first and continual cry, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" And as Paul, the great champion of faith, expended all the energy of his soul in works, through a long and toilsome apostleship, so go and do thou likewise; not doubting that faithful action will throw light on truth and duty, even more infallibly than intellectual contemplation and scientific study. For, "if any man would know the doctrine, let him do the will of my Father which is in heaven."

And here, after all, is our great mistake. We are not sufficiently doers. We are hearers, worshipers, believers, disputers, but not sufficiently doers. Nothing is so much wanting in the Christian world as proper action. Action is in religion what it has been styled elsewhere — the *first, second, and third thing.* There is no spiritual vigor without it. There is no advancement of the individual or the race without it. And yet have we given ourselves up to indolence and sloth. How little do we do! In the midst of the activity of men in all other matters, how little do we *do* in

religion! — as if it were all matter of feeling, or belief, or word, or form; as if in this way we were to reach the estate of the holy men who have gone before us to perfection and heaven. No; from them we part company. The prophets — they worked! The apostles — the earth is full of their labors! The reformers — the nations shook beneath their active tread! The Son of God — how was he straitened till he had accomplished his heavenly work! Who, then, is it that you choose for your companion, when you thus withdraw from these? Who, but that outcast company, concerning which the apostle James in the context writes, "The devils also believe and tremble." They, too, have the faith and the emotion; but no deeds follow to win their justification. Jesus was proved the Son of God by the works which he did, and we can prove ourselves children of God in no other way.

With these reflections I close the present discourse, leaving the treatment of the second branch of the subject proposed till a future occasion.

SERMON XXIX.

HARMONY BETWEEN THE DOCTRINES OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AND BY WORKS.

JAMES II. 24.

BY WORKS A MAN IS JUSTIFIED, AND NOT BY FAITH ONLY.

ROMANS III. 28.

A MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WITHOUT THE DEEDS OF THE LAW.

Having endeavored, in a former discourse, to explain the doctrine of justification by works, I would now, in accordance with the plan proposed, proceed to consider the other doctrine, — that of justification by faith, — and to show how it is that they both harmonize and form parts of the same great truth.

The subject evidently concerns the great question of the divine government, and the principles on which God deals with men. By what rule, and on what terms, does the Father of men grant favor and life to his children? The reply to this, on general grounds, is exceedingly simple: "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and the righteous are his delight." A being of infinite holiness can approve and reward nothing but holiness, and holiness he will approve and reward; all, therefore, who possess this character must of course receive his approval. There is one immutable

law; the beings who conform to that conform to the divine will; and if all beings did this, there could be no reason for his displeasure, and all would of course receive his benediction.

But with all beings such is not the case. Man does not keep the perfect law. He is a transgressor. "There is not a just man that sinneth not." "There is none good," in this complete sense, "no, not one." On the ground of adherence to the law, of unblamable holiness, none could find acceptance. What, then, is to be done?

This is the question which Paul, in the beginning of his epistle, proposes, and designs to answer. He begins with illustrating the statement just made, that men do not observe the requisitions of the perfect law. He first exhibits the iniquity which prevailed in the corrupt heathen world, and then shows that, in this respect, the chosen people of Judea could boast of no superiority: all alike are guilty before God. "By the deeds of the law no flesh is justified." This is his conclusion. And what then? Does God abandon his children? Is there no hope? The apostle answers, none in the perfect fulfilment of the law; but another method there is — that of faith. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets — even the righteousness of God which is, by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe."

1. In treating this doctrine, the first remark is, that *it is not a new doctrine*, first taught in the gospel, or introduced by Paul. It is brought forward with new prominence and with new application; but the principle on which it rests was familiar to the old Mosaic dispensation. This is plainly implied in the succeeding chapter, where the apostle illustrates it from the history of Abraham in the Old Testament,

and explains that that father of the faithful was himself at the beginning justified by faith.

"For what saith the Scripture? Abraham *believed God*, and it was counted to him for righteousness. He, against hope, believed in hope; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able to perform. And therefore it was imputed unto him for righteousness. Now, it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed unto him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

This illustration not only throws light on the meaning of the apostle, but is particularly satisfactory, as showing that the doctrine was not new; as suggesting, indeed, the analogy between the various dispensations of God's grace; showing that the moral government of the universe is not now conducted upon one principle, and was anciently upon another, but that an absolute and immutable identity pertains through all — circumstances being changed, but not the fundamental principle.

The same fact is evinced by that passage in the epistle to the Hebrews, which speaks so eloquently of the innumerable examples of faith among the ancient worthies. The writer is exhorting the persecuted brethren to endure manfully their trials, looking up in trust and confidence to God. To enforce the exhortation, he quotes from the prophet, "The just shall live by faith," — the same expression quoted by Paul when he speaks of this doctrine, — and then proceeds to encourage them, by showing how the ancients, living by faith, were judged and accepted of God. That long catalogue of illustrious saints is a cloud of witnesses to the

antiquity of the doctrine of the text; since they all lived by faith, and died in faith, and "became heirs of the righteousness," i. e. justification, "which is by faith." And it should be remarked here — for it is ever necessary to be borne in mind in order to the clear apprehension of the point at which we aim — that, in all these instances, from first to last, the faith is connected with some acts of obedience; evidently hinting that it justified because it prompted to obedience — as, for example, in the cases of Abel, Noah, and Moses.

Thus we are referred back to the doctrine which we have already examined, and which is so distinctly announced by James, that works are essential to prove the reality of the faith, and that, unless thus proved real, it has no saving power. Or, as the apostle himself expresses it, in words which give the key to the true interpretation of the whole matter, "We see how faith wrought with their works, and by works was faith made perfect."

2. Again, not only is the doctrine of justification by faith recognized in the ancient revelation, but equally in the natural government of God. It is the very principle by which moral desert is determined, agreeably to the light of reason and the universal standard of moral obligation. It is, in fact, the great principle of moral government. Let me attempt to show this.

I say, it is the great principle by which judgment is rendered concerning the character of moral beings. There can be no doubt that, by an eternal law, every being is to be treated, on the whole, according to his character. This is equitable, and any other treatment would be inequitable. What constitutes a man's character? Not the outward act, but the act taken in connection with the motive or intention. Independently of the motive or intention, the act has no moral meaning, so far as the argument is

concerned; and we always judge of the agent by our knowledge of the motive or intention of his deeds. The beneficent deed, if known to spring from base motives, and to be done with malicious or self-interested intent, so far from causing the doer to be accounted beneficent or praiseworthy, determines us to regard him as evil. And so, on the contrary, an evil deed, if known to proceed from an upright purpose, and to be done with a pure aim, leaves no stain on the character of the doer; we excuse, and even honor him, though we deprecate his error. This is the universal judgment among human beings. A man is justified or accounted righteous on account of the principle on which he acts.

There can be no doubt that, in the judgment of Almighty God, the same rule prevails — that he, too, has regard to the intent and purpose of the heart, judging not, as man so often judges, and is often compelled to judge, by outward appearances, but looking directly to the heart, and never mistaking the motive, which man is liable to misapprehend. He only the more absolutely carries into effect this perfect rule, and approves or condemns from a thorough view of the principle and the act, both lying before him, equally visible and indissolubly joined.

We wish to know, therefore, what is the true principle by which a moral being ought to be actuated, guided, and ruled, in order to be accounted righteous? Is there any *one*, or must we look for many?

Doubtless, in the diversified and complicated circumstances which attend existence, there must be many justifiable motives. There is not one relation, but many; not one class of duties, but many; not one set of affections, but many. A man must be faithful to himself, and the great charge of his own nature intrusted to him; to the circle of kindred, and to his friends in various ranks. There are motives, then, growing out of each, essentially pertaining to each, and

all of them, for that reason, not only lawful, but binding. Thus a regard to his own good, filial affection, fraternal love, parental love, love of mankind, patriotism, each, in its place, has its legitimate office; each is recognized and approved, as becoming and right. But then, beyond all these, and above all, there extends a supreme relation, overruling and comprising these — the relation, namely, to the great Source of being, and Foundation of all relations. The obligations growing out of that relation are, therefore, chief and supreme; the most right, the most binding, the most comprehensive. It subdues all the others to itself — just as the fatherly authority pervades and binds the family circle. Hence it may be that this one obligation, felt and acted upon, may be sufficient for the entire circle of duty; may take the place of, supersede, or, rather, may comprehend, all the others; so that he who shall guide himself by this as the one director, shall thereby discharge the universal law of right, and accomplish the entire end of virtue.

Is it not so? The motives springing from each relation, justify him, in so far as he is regarded simply as holding that relation; but regard him as man, holding all these relations — not as a father, a husband, neighbor, patriot, but a *man* — he needs a more extended principle, and that is found in the obligation of that high relation which covers all, namely, the *principle of religion.* This is the highest and most complete condition of the soul, when it is so united to God, and swayed by a sense of the divine Being, that it does, *therefore*, and as if naturally, all the right duties of every place and season — a perfect condition of the soul, because the soul has its will one with the will of God.

This is the religious principle — higher and more venerable than the other principles, as the great Being to whom it points is higher than all inferior beings; embracing all others, as he embraces all other beings; and above the

principle of a regard to right and the abstract sense of duty, because at once coincident with that, and adding unto it a powerful affection — *love* as well as duty — a filial sentiment toward the Father, as well as reverence to the law. It leans upon *him*, draws life and sweetness, as well as guidance, from *him;* and tastes the serenity and bliss of cordial communion with that infinite Fountain of blessedness and peace.

It is evident that if any man be thus filled and guided, he must be the "friend of God," and the subject of his favor. This is the state for which man was made. It was only by falling from this that he fell from the favor of God. If he be restored to this state, he is restored to that favor.

This great and all-comprehending principle, then, is the *religious principle.* And now what is its name? How shall it be called? The Scriptures call it FAITH. That is the word in which the sacred volume includes and wraps up all the holy significance I have just briefly referred to. *Faith* is the name by which, from the day of Abraham down to the closing of the apostolic day, the Bible describes that child-like trust, that confiding self-surrender, that obedient and loving reliance, in which God's children live with him, and conform themselves to his will. That religious principle which is the highest to which man can subject himself, and which alone is adequate to create a life of righteousness and true holiness, — that religious principle is, throughout the Scriptures, called *faith.*

This spring of action, which absorbs all others, controls all others, and leads a man to act with a single reference to the divine glory, as if there were no other being and no other object, and yet, by that very means, to discharge all obligations to other beings as punctiliously as if they only had existence, — this, in Scripture, is faith, — faith. It fills

the biography and history of its sacred pages with examples of duty and suffering, action and endurance. It rings through the solemn strains of its inspired poetry, and the stirring or tearful expostulations of its exalted prophecy, and the tender counsels it utters of divine love. What else is the noble spirit of Joseph, and Samuel, and Jeremiah? What else the burden of the glorious Psalms? What else the dignity of Job, when at last he truly surrenders himself to his trial, and says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"? And what else that elevating and tranquillizing exclamation of the prophet, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee"? All these are examples of the religious principle pervading and absorbing the spiritual being, and bringing it to the Father. And the Scriptures call this *faith*.

We see, then, why faith is said to justify. It is agreeable to a law of the moral universe, which judges of character by the principle. He that acts from faith acts from the highest principle; and God, who judges by inward intent, accepts and blesses.

This statement is of itself sufficient to vindicate this doctrine from the charge of fanaticism and mysticism, and the errors into which fanaticism and mysticism have led. No one would think of disputing the general fact that men are accounted virtuous because of the principle from which they act; that a man is a man of integrity whose dealings are fair because guided by an upright principle, and not he with whom it is only policy, and a calculation of self-interest; that he is benevolent whose kindnesses flow from a real fountain of love within his soul, and not he who hopes to gain reputation or gratitude; that he is devout who worships God from a deep reverence and hearty love, and not he who stands praying in the street to be seen of

men. Now, it is very clear and intelligible, that as it is in these several cases, so it is in the case of that *total character*, which God regards in the final judgment of men. He is acknowledged *then* the righteous man, and is, therefore, accepted, who has been righteous because led by the highest and most comprehensive principle of moral action, — that is, by faith, — rather than he who has followed his own desires, or done well from low and sinister motives. And thus, just as "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," so shall it be accounted to all who live by the same principle.

Thus much, then, has already been made clear. We are now to observe how this universal maxim is made to become a part of the Christian religion, and incorporated in it as a prominent doctrine.

We shall find that this is effected in three particulars.

1. Through the introduction of new objects of faith;
2. Through its connection with the forgiveness of sin;
3. Through its superior efficacy as a practical principle.

1. To the truth of natural religion, and the doctrines of Judaism, Christianity added new objects of faith. When we inquire, in detail, what all these are, we immediately find a difference among Christians on the subject. A part of these objects of faith are supposed by some to form a portion of the peculiarity of Christianity, which are thought by others to be only portions of the doctrine of reason, and to have been known in the world before the coming of Christ. This is not strange. It is, in the nature of things, extremely difficult to discriminate. Christianity resembled, at its introduction, a bright light introduced into a hall already partially illuminated. It does not destroy, but blends with, all the previous light therein, in such a manner that you cannot at all say where the line lies between them, — which

are rays from the new source and which from the old, — and may even be unable to say whether this or that object could or could not be distinctly seen if the new lamp had not been brought in. Thus it is not always possible to determine whether a certain truth could or could not have been known, unless Christianity had displayed it. Yet, in regard to the general fact, that Christianity *presents new objects of faith*, there can be no dispute. And what *some* of them are, is equally plain. The person and history of Jesus Christ; that he came for the salvation of the world; that he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, — are among the objects of faith that are additional to those before known. They, therefore, introduce to men topics of interest and motives to virtue unknown before. They thus form the peculiarity of the Christian system. And therefore, when faith is therein spoken of as the great principle, it is as faith different from any previously indulged, just so far as it fixes itself on those truths not previously known. The faith of Abraham and of David were valued and accepted, but the faith of Paul and James rested on fuller acquaintance with the divine will; and thus, the least in the kingdom of heaven became greater than the wisest of the old dispensation.

2. This, then, is one point in which the New Testament affixes a peculiarity to this universal maxim. The second is discerned in its connection with the doctrine of *pardon*. Upon no question were the minds of men more distressed, and on no point did reason more earnestly desire a revelation from Heaven, than concerning the pardon of sin. The Jews were greatly enlightened, and knew the divine mercy; but they knew, too, that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. The other nations were in the dark, and filled with the superstitious fears which always have sway in

dark night. Hence, when the gospel came, it was important that it should not only insist on the *removal of sin*, but on the *pardon* of sin; not only teach men how to be *better in future*, but satisfy them by showing that they were *forgiven for the past*. Accordingly, we find that *repentance, redemption, forgiveness of sin, reconciliation*, is the burden of the gospel. Sin being the cause of man's alienation from God, repentance became the first step toward a return or reconciliation. The faith which shall excite to repentance must be the first step toward pardon or redemption. Therefore *faith* belongs, of necessity, to the gospel scheme; because without it the gospel scheme, which proposes reconciliation by repentance, could not be effectual. Its whole apparatus, accordingly, is made to bear on this point. *Believe, repent, and be forgiven*, is its watchword and burden. Thus this doctrine is evidently a part of the great doctrine of the divine placability — that doctrine which pervades the New Testament, teaching that the Deity does not administer the government of the world as a Sovereign only, but as a Father; not with arbitrary, but paternal discipline; making allowance for his children's frailty, and more anxious to encourage and restore them than to vindicate his own official dignity.

This is important to be remembered, or else the view remains altogether incomplete. For it might be said, "Very true: if a man has *obeyed* from this principle, he will undoubtedly be accepted. But suppose he have not obeyed — is a sinner: how will this principle help him then?" The reply is, that *this is the very case which the apostle is treating;* he is speaking of the provision made for sinners; and it is precisely this, that if they will seize on this principle, and adopt it as theirs, their past sins shall be forgiven, and they accounted as if they had not sinned. God has sent

forth his Son, by his life and death to give assurance that he will not strictly, in that case, visit them for their forsaken transgressions; but as, by receiving Christ and his doctrines, and conforming thereto in a new life, they come to that state of character which he requires, he therefore, in his clemency, will freely forgive their former wrong-doings. This newness of mind, thus attained, he will accept, instead of their old life, because it insures a new life in future. And this brings us to the third particular specified, namely, the *efficacy of this faith* in the objects introduced by Christianity.

3. An object of faith is valuable just in proportion to its efficacy; and it is *because of this efficacy*, that any objects of faith are made known. Their worth is just in proportion as they give energy to the principle of faith; and this will evidently depend upon their adaptedness to excite the mind and affect the heart and conscience. Herein lies the grandeur of the Christian truths; they are signally suited to excite the mind and affect the heart and conscience. That God governed the world was already known; but Christianity added the clear revelation of his perfections; especially of his mercy; especially of the exercise of that mercy in the mission of his Son, not merely to give the law, — Moses had done that; not merely to teach high truth — the prophets and the wise had done that, — but to manifest God's readiness to pardon sinners, and restore and receive them to his spiritual grace. This was Christ's chief and moving theme. He came not merely to announce a future life, but to explain the greatness of that life, and the requisitions for attaining it, and to encourage and exalt human hope by his own resurrection. Here were objects of faith of the most stupendous and affecting character, novel illustrations of the paternal relation of God, and touching exhibitions

of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, making appeal to the noble and the grateful sentiments of the heart, to the deep consciousness of ill desert, to the longing of the soul for something higher, and its yearning after immortality and peace. These are doctrines of *power*. No one could receive them heartily, and not prove them efficacious in moulding his character and bringing him to God. The reception of these doctrines of the new covenant imparts its greatest power to the religious principle, and gives it supreme sway. When it has supreme sway, it moulds the character into that form that God approves, and thus proves itself adequate to the work of justification before him. The prodigal has returned, and the father welcomes him.

Hence the positive language of the apostle, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." And that for a very good reason — that faith is the only sufficient spirit and principle for observing the law. Nothing but this can arm a man with adequate *motives*. And so we are brought to the conclusion that justification by faith and justification by works are inseparable truths. God hath joined them, and they are one.

The end of all is a restoration to the favor and image of God in righteousness and true holiness. Suppose, then, a man have all faith, like Paul or Gabriel, but it lie inactive, as a theory or opinion, and affect not his character, — what then? Of course it does not bring him to true righteousness and true holiness: it cannot save him. And so, if a man do all external works of religion, but without any good motive, without any religious principle or a hearty piety, — what then? Can such works justify him? Evidently not, while his heart is wrong. This is not *true holiness*. "Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good; or the tree corrupt,

and the fruit will be corrupt. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." And if the dominion of *Christian faith* be the best assurance that a man will observe the law, it is clear that the establishment of that faith will establish the law.

In what way could he who designed to establish the law hope to succeed? Only by some method which brings about a willing obedience. An obedience unwillingly rendered would be unacceptable. It could have no qualities to recommend it in the sight of God, the Judge. It could have no virtue. And by what method could he expect to bring about a willing obedience, a voluntary, cheerful subjection to his strict rule, a rigid self-denial, an unwavering purity, an uncorrupted self-government, amid temptation and harshness, amidst solicitation, passion, and seducing company; when the flesh rebels, and the blood is on fire, and a smiling world flatters; when immediate gain is at hand in the one course, and nothing but toil and penury at hand in the other? What means shall be devised, in the midst of all, and in spite of all, to persuade the tempted and toiling man to adhere cheerfully to the right, and find pleasure in keeping the commandments: From any other motive he may burst away, or by it be held reluctantly to his slavish task; but if he be governed by *faith*, the reluctance is changed into pleasure. He prefers the will of God; and with a willing and loving readiness he conforms to his commandments. "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

And why is it that any violate the law and live unrighteously? Could it be so, if they had faith? if they believed that God is a Father of infinite holiness and love? if they believed that Christ had come with words of eternal life; that he lived and died for us, and that the hope of our souls rests

on him? If their persuasion of the reality of the divine government and benignity, and of the intercession of the Son, were a living principle in their minds, could they then be disobedient and unfaithful as they are?

If, then, you seek power to do duty and accomplish yourself in holiness, — if you would be strong to resist temptation and put down opposition, and, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, persevere in righteousness and purity, in charity and fidelity, — arm yourselves with this principle. It never has failed those who have heartily given themselves to it. Resolution falters, sentiment dies, interest and policy waver and deceive, and self-reliance is a broken reed in the day of battle; but in religious principle you are encompassed by a panoply that may defy the universe. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith. "*You can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth you.*"

If you would live in the highest state that man can attain; if you see that a life of pleasure is unsatisfactory and low; if you feel that gain, and ambition, and knowledge, and fame, and power, exalt with an unhealthy excitement, and still leave a weariness and craving at the heart, — then put them all down into the second place, and enthrone faith in the first; walk thus in company with Jesus; have your conversation in heaven; make your fellowship with God; and, living thus, as if already past the separating line of the grave, take the present enjoyment of man's future and eternal exaltation. What so lofty a life on earth as that which shall coincide with the expected life of heaven?

If you would shun the two opposites and easily-besetting errors of formality and worldly morality, which so much divide between them the mass of men, and ruin so many, then adopt this great principle. The formal Christian takes

up the book and the letter, and adheres to the appointed routine; while perhaps the spirit of love dies within him, and the duties of active life are neglected, as having no interest for a spiritual man. The man of the world devotes himself to the business of the world, and the cares of his present interest, and counts his thrift and decency the adequate accomplishment of Christian holiness; while the graces of the immortal spirit within are starved by want of culture, and perish in their prison. If you would avoid these two errors, and secure to yourself all the benefits of the doctrine and the promise of the New Testament, surrender yourselves to this great principle. It will lead, as nothing else can lead, to the culture of the soul within, and the guidance of the life without, *purifying the heart and working by love.* It will at once dispose unto and strengthen for that thorough and continuous fidelity of living, whereby a man arrives at the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

God grant that we all may be followers of those who through faith inherited the promises; not doubting that, through the grace of God, we shall be saved, even as they, if "*faith shall work with our works, and by works our faith be made perfect.*"

SERMON XXX.

THE DOCTRINE OF PROBATION.

DEUTERONOMY VIII. 2.

THE LORD THY GOD LED THEE THESE FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, TO HUMBLE THEE, AND TO PROVE THEE, TO KNOW WHAT WAS IN THINE HEART, WHETHER THOU WOULDEST KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS OR NO.

The parallel has often been drawn between this journey of the Jews in the desert and the journey of life. Our minds are familiar with the imagery thus employed, and we assent continually to the justice of the resemblance, even in many of the more minute particulars. Perhaps in nothing does it more justly hold than in regard to probationary character. Each is a state of trial, discipline, education, preparation for something further. "The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no." In these same words may the purpose and character of human life be described.

I propose, therefore, to discourse on human *probation*. It is a word which describes the condition of man, and helps to explain much in the economy of Providence and the phenomena of our earthly being, which ordinarily seems enveloped in mystery. The doctrine of probation, properly

applied, may be regarded as a key alike to the doctrines of religion and the dispensations of Providence. Both in a speculative and a practical view, therefore, it may well be a subject of interest.

The design of the present discourse is to show what is meant when we call life a *state of probation*, and to justify and apply this great doctrine.

Let me ask you to bring up to your minds this thing which we call *life*. Let your observation, your imagination, and your memory set before you the picture of this earthly existence. It begins in helplessness, dependence, exposure. The infant is the feeblest and least helpful of all things. It proceeds in exposure, imperfection, sorrow, temptation, guilt. The child goes forward in the midst of hazards innumerable, — buffeted, caressed, decoyed, misled, through a long vicissitude of enjoyments and distresses. Youth follows, with new exposures, new penalties; passions, duties pressing; hope, ambition, self-confidence impelling; distrust, despondency, pain, and a thousand influences from the character and fortune of childhood throwing their light or their shadow on the whole present and the whole future. With all mankind, in all ages, there is but a repetition of the same phenomena — each individual weighed down with burdens of care and shame, weakness and grief accumulated from past errors; or lighted with peace, cheerfulness, and self-content reflected from past right conduct or successful enterprise — every period alike, childhood, youth, age, wedded to what went before, chained to what is to follow, in an indissoluble series of causes and consequences, is a perpetual mixture of opposite ingredients — happiness and misery, good and evil. To the casual eye it might seem a chaotic disarrangement, "a mighty maze, and all without a plan," (as the poet described it, in his first draft of his poem,) without

order, without progress, without purpose, without end. So some have regarded it. So the cynical and misanthropic are always disposed to represent it. But without plan, purpose, or end, it cannot be, unless we are ready to say it is without a governor. If there be an almighty and wise Creator and Ruler, — and *that there is all Nature cries aloud through all her works*, and her voice is heard bearing testimony above all the din of the confusion, — then there must be a purpose. Therefore the seeming confusion must be seeming only. Order is his first law, and the hidden order must be capable of being exhibited to those who shall diligently seek it.

But what is this purpose? Not happiness — there is too much palpable wretchedness to permit us to dream that enjoyment is the object of this present existence. If we were to suppose it so, we should be compelled also to admit that the object had been defeated; that the great Father had been unable to secure to his offspring the felicity he had proposed. We see, indeed, beneficent design, but not singly nor clearly, in all things.

Neither is it retribution. There is too much of beauty, and loveliness, and holy satisfaction, and sweet enjoyment, to permit us to account this a place of exile, a colony of aliens and convicts. Love, peace, purity, devotion, have their home here. Blossoms of paradise hang upon the thorny branches, and the innocent dove broods amid the wastes. In a word, the design could not have been the execution of retribution, for that design is not answered. A thousand wrongs go unrebuked and unavenged; and a thousand souls, that once were devoted to wrong, have, without signal punishment, by repentance, reformation, and faith, been able to find this a tranquil and satisfying home.

If neither a place of enjoyment nor of retribution, what

remains, but that it be a place of *preparation*, of *duty*, of *trial?* What else is signified by that very assemblage of heterogeneous and discordant elements which have been noticed — the uncertainty, the vicissitudes, the entanglements? Why else are they all fashioning such a complicated and enigmatical scene, except in order that the human being, cast into the midst, driven to and fro, tossed from side to side, influenced all ways by all circumstances, should thereby be tested, so as to prove what manner of stuff he is made of, and what manner of creature he will become, — "led forty years through this wilderness to humble him, and to prove him, to know what was in his heart, whether he would keep God's commandments or no." This explains the strange position. This clears up the mystery. The brief joy; the maddening sorrow; the dismaying calamity; virtue wronged and trodden upon; vice prosperous; imprudences dealt with as sins; an iron chain of causes and effects; an inexorable law of the physical and moral nature, punishing the man with scorpion lashes for the follies of the boy; and Heaven sometimes hiding its face, apparently alike to the sufferings of the good and the return of the penitent; — all these things, inexplicable to the unbeliever and the ungodly, are proofs to the trusting and faithful, that this is only a state of trial, preparatory to a final state, and that all that is appointed here is but preliminary to the final adjustment hereafter. Principle is to be tested. Character is to be tried. The soul is to be thus *educated*. By rightly bearing the trials, rightly enduring the temptations, rightly struggling with obstacles, it improves its virtue, it shakes off its earthly corruptions, fits itself for a holier land, and is, at last, ready to pass over the Jordan of death into the glorious inheritance beyond; — or, failing in all this, sinks and perishes in the desert, and has no part in the promised consummation.

Learn a parable of the Jews when led forth from Egypt. They were to be led into a distant country, to take possession of it, and become a prosperous and sovereign nation. But they must first be fitted for such a situation and work; and by their long bondage they have been rendered totally unfit; the spirit has been broken, the character debased; they want the manliness, independence, vigor of mind, which are essential to such an enterprise; and, therefore, as we see, in pusillanimity and alarm, they all constantly shrink from the hardships of the way, and cry to return to their comfortable dependence. This character must be changed, or they cannot be fit for the difficulties of subduing the present inhabitants, or for the charge of self-government in the new colonies, and the founding of a great empire. And how shall it be changed? By the discipline of a forty years' wandering in the desert, where they will be tested; their resolution, faith, obedience, devotion tried and strengthened, and those peculiar qualities cultivated by a suitable education, which will fit them for their approaching residence. To them, with their ill-informed minds, their imbecility, short-sightedness, and inexperience, this whole proceeding was a mystery, a maze without a plan. "Why are we brought here in the wilderness to die here?" they cried. And it was not till the way of Providence was indicated by the successful result, that they could recognize the necessity and wisdom of the plan to which they had been subjected. Then they perceived it all clearly; and through all future periods of their history, in psalms of thanksgiving and odes of praise, they celebrated the glory of that dispensation, by which, through trial, the nation had been led home. And just so, though multitudes now complain of the darkness and mystery of this unequal scene — yet in the thanksgivings of the eternal world it will also be a topic

of praise that the soul was thus led through darkness into the marvellous light of heaven.

We see, then, what is meant when it is said that life is a probation, — partially a state of happiness, and partially of retribution, — but only so far as is necessary to indicate the purpose of the probation and encourage the faith of those who endure it.

The nature of this state will be more distinctly perceived when we observe, in the next place, what is especially implied in the condition of those who are subjected to it. There seem to be implied four things.

1. In order to a state of probation, it is implied that those subjected to it possess *a moral faculty*. Probation, in all cases, is to be in accordance with the end proposed; and a given end can be brought about only by using those means or instruments whose nature or qualities are adapted to that end. In subjecting to trial any machine, we have regard to its nature. We test the steam-engine by an application of fire and water, but a musical instrument by application of the laws of harmony and acoustics. We submit to one sort of discipline the youth destined to live by the labor of agriculture, and to another him who is to toil in the courts of law. He that wants eyesight cannot be trained to the art of painting, nor he that wants hearing to the practice of music. The end proposed determines the discipline, and the discipline can be applied only to faculties susceptible of attaining the end proposed.

Now, the end proposed in the human being is the happiness of an eternal world. Yet happiness is moral and spiritual, springing from obedience, and resemblance to, that Infinite Being who fills and alone blesses that eternal world. No being can attain it, except he have the faculty

for moral and spiritual living; and it seems, therefore, an almost superfluous proposition formally to assert that, for this reason, man must be endowed with a moral faculty. Yet asserted it must be, sometimes — with formality — with emphasis; — for it is sometimes formally denied, and in practical life frequently overlooked and forgotten. Philosophy sometimes steps in, and asserts that the moral capacity is not original and inherent; and the customs of society educate the manners and the intellect assiduously, to the exclusion of the conscience. The ends of society in this life may be answered by the culture of the manners and the intellect: therefore society may feel justified in creating for them special probation. But the ends of another life — the final purpose of human existence — cannot be thus answered; and therefore the great and all-enduring principles appointed by Providence must apply to another faculty of our nature than the intellect — cannot, indeed, be carried through, except by appeal to a moral faculty, the existence of which is, therefore, implied in this idea of human probation, just as much as the existence of sight is implied in him whom you are training to take care of an astronomical observatory. The importance and use of distinctly insisting on this will be evident in another part of our discussion. For the present, we are only concerned with the statement that the first thing implied in the great idea of human probation is the possession by man of a moral faculty, which recognizes the essential distinctions of right and wrong, and assents to them as the supreme law of the soul.

2. *Liberty.* — This is so completely included in the idea of moral probation, that it is not easy to make a statement which shall render it more obvious than the simple assertion. We have only to picture to ourselves a creature on

probation without liberty, in order to see that it is an absurdity: which proves liberty to be essential to that condition. Let it be the first man, Adam; he is in the garden on trial; the whole trial is centered in one prohibition; his moral strength of faith and obedience is to be tested by the question, *Will he eat the forbidden fruit, or not?* But suppose him not to have liberty; suppose him to be under a necessity, no matter of what description; — call it physical, natural, philosophical; qualify and guard it as you please — but suppose it still to be a necessity, and there is no trial — except, indeed, for the purpose of ascertaining which way the necessity lies — but to Adam himself it is no probation; it determines nothing with respect to his character; it is no test or discipline of his principles. He might have faith, and submission, and love, equal to that of an archangel, and it never could be known, if he were acting under necessity. So, too, in the case of the Jews in our text — they were led forty years in the wilderness. For what? In order "to humble them, and prove them, to know what was in their heart, whether they would keep his commandments or no." But if they were not free to choose and decide, these forty years could determine nothing. They would be merely time and means wasted. Indeed, without multiplying words, it is as easy to hold the idea of the sun without that of light, as the idea of probation without that of liberty.

3. *Opportunity.* — This is so nearly included in the idea of liberty, that it may at first seem hardly to require to be separately specified. Yet there is good ground for distinction. If one be deprived of his liberty, he of course is deprived of opportunity, and so far the two ideas coincide. But, then, it is plain that one may possess his freedom, and yet no opportunity for the exercise of his faculties be presented to him. And further, — to state what is yet more important,

—the character of his trial and its consequent results will greatly vary, according to the nature of the opportunities allowed him. To take again the situation of the first man: If his situation had been in all respects conformed to his desires, and no prohibition laid upon him, he would have been subjected to no trial; no opportunity for disobedience being allowed him, it could not have been determined whether he were disposed to disobey or not. Free he might be, so far as occasions of acting lay before him; but without opportunity to sin, there could be no test of his disposition to virtue. The situation of men in later ages is less simple than his. It is full of complications, of which he, in that primeval retreat, without society or artificial wants, could know nothing. Every man, now, is surrounded by ten thousand influences, flowing in from the state of the world and its institutions, and the character and actions of other men, and also descending to him from the infinitely multiplied influences of former days, which offer to him prohibitions and commands, and opportunities of obedience and disobedience, fifty times in a day, where the first man, in his unsophisticated solitude, met with only one. What is the result? This, namely, that the probation of every man is perpetual, because opportunity is unintermitted — and yet more, that the probation of every man differs from that of every other, because his opportunities differ. A greater or less native facility of temperament; greater or less advantages of early moral discipline; greater or less exposures to evil companions, or to the calamities and afflictions appointed by the hand of Providence; and thousands of similar circumstances, are causes of diversity in the discipline of character among men; and they are all essential to be taken into view in any estimate we would make of the final result. The rules of equity and justice demand that all be treated,

in the end, with a strict regard to the differences in their opportunities for high attainment and distinguished obedience.

4. *Accountableness.* — This, too, is obvious, and has been had in view in all which has been said. It is one of the elements in the idea of probation, which, perhaps, most distinctly of all comes up to the mind when the word is mentioned. Man is tried because he is to be judged. He is trained and proved here because he is to be sentenced hereafter. There is an eternity before the immortal soul. In that eternity there is involved the capacity of happiness and of misery. Its life may be purity, love, felicity, in the company of the holy, in the smile of God, in perpetually growing perfection. It may be debasement, wretchedness, despair, in the company of the evil, in alienation from God. Each is possible. Fidelity to all duty fits for the one; unfaithfulness dooms to the other. Will a man be faithful? It can only be known by putting him to the proof. Will he become fit? He can become so only by discipline. Trial, education, preparation, are the indispensable prerequisites. He is endowed with faculties as his talents; with conscience as a lamp; with opportunities and liberty — all to be used, all to be accounted for. We all understand what they are; we perceive why they are what they are, as soon as we add to them this solemn idea of responsibility and the final judgment of God.

I have thus set forth the doctrine that this life is a state of probation. The uses and application of the doctrine — various, interesting, solemn — will engage our attention at another time. The general and familiar application is obvious as it is important. It is this; that not an hour can pass, nor a plan be devised, nor a deed done, nor a word be spoken, which ought not to be affected, determined, by the

consideration that it bears on our probation. For, whether slight or momentous, it affects our character; and character is the one thing essential. On character the judgment is passed, on character the fate of eternity is suspended. Character, therefore, it is which is tested, proved, cultivated, by the discipline of life; by the discipline of every hour of life; improved or deteriorated by every event. Hence the solemn obligation to watch every hour and every event. Whatever it may be, whatever it may bring, it appeals to the sense of right and wrong for our decision. It exercises our liberty of thought and action; it is an opportunity to show our faith, and exercise our principles; it is one more item towards the total of our great account. It may not, therefore, be safely neglected. A wise man will be sacredly faithful to it.

SERMON XXXI.

THE DOCTRINE OF PROBATION A KEY TO THE MYSTERIES AND DOCTRINES OF REVELATION.

DEUTERONOMY VIII. 2.

THE LORD THY GOD LED THEE THESE FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, TO HUMBLE THEE, AND TO PROVE THEE, TO KNOW WHAT WAS IN THINE HEART, WHETHER THOU WOULDEST KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS OR NO.

I PURPOSE to pursue the subject introduced to your attention in this morning's discourse, by examining the relation of the doctrine of probation, first, *to the doctrines of Christianity*, and, secondly, *to the dispensations of Providence.*

I remark, then, in the first place, that the right application of this doctrine is the key to the mysteries of revelation; both explaining to us why there are any mysteries left in it, and removing the perplexity which attends the reception of them.

The doctrines of Christianity are to be found in the New Testament. But they are not laid down there in systematic order; they are not set forth in distinct propositions, so peremptorily that they cannot be misapprehended or misconstrued. This is evident from the fact that they are differently apprehended by different minds. Good and obedient men,

seeking for God's communications in his Word, find different doctrines announced there. This is the origin of the diversity of Christian sects. Plainly, therefore, there are not only the intrinsic difficulties which attend subjects of this mysterious character, but added difficulties from the manner in which they are stated in the Scriptures. And in our serious hours we are disturbed by two questions, which solicit an answer, but often in vain — 1. Why is it that these difficulties still adhere to religion, notwithstanding God has made a revelation to his children? and, 2. With what solution of them are we to be satisfied?

Who has not, in his secret longings after a full knowledge of all truth, been troubled in spirit by these questions? The doctrine of probation offers the satisfactory solution.

1. Why is it that these difficulties still adhere to religion, notwithstanding the revelation? Why were not the doctrines of the New Testament set forth in propositions so worded, and so systematized, that there should be no possibility of difference or mistake — so that the simplest should not fail to perceive what they were, and the subtlest be unable to pervert them? Why this exposure to confusion, this liability to error, even when honestly preferring and seeking for the truth? If there be any mystery that should weigh heavily on human faith, it might be this. Yet it disappears from before him who understands the probable purpose of life. If man is on trial, every thing that concerns him is to be interpreted accordingly. God causes his children to walk these few years through this wild of opinions and doubts, that he may "humble them, and prove them, to know what is in their hearts, whether they will keep his commandments or no." If all were clear and plain, where would be the proving? If there were no doubt in the way of truth, and no toil in seeking it, how could man prove that he pre-

fers and loves it? how know that his faith is hearty, honest, and sincere, if no inquiry were necessary, no examination, no opportunities voluntarily and patiently to compare and judge? Faith, in that case, would be simply an intellectual result, like the conviction of the understanding by a mathematical demonstration. It would be necessary, not moral. There would be no bias to be overcome, and therefore no, character exercised in overcoming; no choice, no freedom — therefore no operation of religious or any motives. But as things are now, truth is to be arrived at with difficulty. It demands fairness in the exercise of the mind, sincerity of purpose, love for the right, and perseverance in pursuing it. All these high qualities of a moral being are put to the test. The very purpose of life requires that it be so, and is promoted by it. The possession of unquestioned truth by a direct light is reserved to another world; the pursuit of it belongs to this, and is made to try and perfect the principles of faith, honesty, and obedience.

2. In the second place, this consideration not only explains why these difficulties should be left in regard to the Christian doctrine, but offers also a satisfactory solution of them. The mind naturally longs for a solution of them, is impatient to remain in suspense, and hurries to a decision. By some scheme of philosophy or philosophical interpretation man throws what light he can on the dark depths, and fastens his mind to some satisfactory exposition. Hence it is that such strange and unnatural doctrines have been sometimes received as parts of the Christian system. They were received because they seemed to clear up some obscure mode of speech, or decide the balance between some perplexing questions. An irrational exposition, which accounts for the difficulty, sets easier on the mind than continued suspense. A hearty believer in revelation will often prefer

to contradict his own reason, which he knows to be imperfect, rather than remain undecided about a doctrine of Scripture, which he knows, if a doctrine of Scripture, cannot really be irrational, though it may for the present seem so. And to many minds any system of doctrine which is harmonious and complete in itself is welcome for that reason, while the want of system always leaves the mind in a painful state of uneasiness and vacillation.

The consideration of the doctrine that the purpose of life is probation would do much to remedy these evils. For, first, it would make men willing to take the doctrines as they lie in the Scripture, undigested into a formal system; since the object of probation is not intellectual, to account for the difficulty, to reconcile the mystery, but moral, to try the faith and test the principle of obedience: and the duty of man is to submit, in simplicity, to the instruction though it be shrouded in mystery, rather than to cut the knot by the reception of a strange and irrational dogma or system, invented for the purpose. To this refuge of harsh and irrational dogmas embarrassed system-makers have oftentimes flown; and what I say is, they would be no longer under that necessity if they properly considered that the necessary duty is not to frame a system out of the New Testament, but to submit to it.

But further still. The primary purpose of life casts light upon each of these various doctrines, and proposes a satisfactory exposition. These doctrines relate to the *divine government*, and the *terms of acceptance*; the *mediation of Christ*; the *original character and final destiny of man*. On each of these points there are confessedly difficulties.

1. In regard to the divine government, for instance, what is to be said? Is it arbitrary and despotic, or is it founded on reasons of universal right and paternal equity? On the

one hand, it is represented as that of a father, a dispensation of parental grace; and thence there are disciples who construct it wholly by their idea of parental love. But, again, it is elsewhere spoken of as an unqualified and absolute sovereignty, unyielding in its requisitions and irrespective of persons — "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and whom I will I harden;" and thence there have been those who have erected a system of austerity and irreversible decrees. In this diversity of interpretation, how is the reader of the New Testament to decide? He may, indeed, by a careful study, with critical and philosophical helps and painful comparison of arguments, satisfy himself; but for this few have leisure or opportunity; or he may rest his faith on the decision of some favorite teacher — which mode is not the most satisfactory to an anxious mind. Let him therefore —let any man — resort to this idea of a probationary state, as the fundamental idea, and compare opinions with that. Where there is probation, there is nothing arbitrary, except the instruments of the probation. The instrument or mode of trial is an absolute appointment; but every thing else — every thing connected with its operation — is left free. The way is open for man to do in relation to it what he may please, and to decide without restraint the use he will make of it, and the issue to which it shall come. This is clearly set forth in the probation of the first man. The prohibition which was the instrument or mode of his probation was an arbitrary appointment; but nothing else; all else was left at Adam's disposal. To suppose otherwise would be to turn the threat and the promise into mockery. The moment there is any control in regard to the manner in which he should meet and use that trial, the reality of that trial ceases, that moment the probation is at an end. An antecedent determination, a decree of election or reprobation, is, therefore,

an absurdity, and impossible. Accordingly, the election spoken of in the New Testament is only an election to privileges in the present world; that is, appointment to a certain form of probation rather than another — appointment to what I just called the instruments of probation. So far there is respect of persons; but as regards their treatment, there is no respect of persons, the more favored and the less favored being dealt with by the same equal Providence. And thus we are enabled to understand that the government of God is an exercise of supreme and arbitrary sovereignty in the appointment of man's present condition — which satisfies the austere language on the one side; but that, in the issue of the probation thence arising, there is nothing arbitrary, but all is decided equitably by the fair issue of a fair trial.

2. *The mediation of Jesus Christ.* — Here, too, are difficulties and conflicting opinions, and the humble believer would gladly find a clew to their perfect reconciliation. On the one hand, it is thought that the power of that mediation lies in an expiation made literally by the blood of the Redeemer, who endured the penalty of human sin, and thus purchased the pardon of the sinner. On the other hand, it is thought to lie in the gracious establishment of certain means and influences, which, operating on the human soul, shall awaken in it the ability to live to God. And men, in their perplexities, have darkened the subject, till some have fancied his expiation was intended for a few elect ones alone; some, that it was intended for all, but only the few are actually benefited; some, that every soul equally partakes the infinite redemption; and some, that nothing is gained from it for man except the impulse to holy action in his own soul. How does the doctrine of probation apply itself to these ideas, and clear away the human contradictions which have mystified the sacred truth! Every thing that concerns man is a

part of his trial — the intervention of Christ Jesus for his redemption, as well as all things else; so this intervention, whenever spoken of in the New Testament, as it perpetually is, is spoken of as being one of the great privileges for which account is to be rendered. But if we suppose that the power of the mediation consists in an action on the mind of God, in any way inducing him to an arbitrary forgiveness, — to pardon one simply because another has paid the penalty, — then, instead of making part of his probation, it puts a stop to his probation. The final decision, in that case, is made upon grounds independent of the manner in which the discipline of life operates. But that cannot be. The mediation, therefore, must be made to act, not on the mind of God only, but on that of man, so as to form a part of his discipline; or, in other words, any interpretation which turns the work of Christ into a means of salvation to man irrespective of the use he may make of it, or any interpretation which encourages a belief that man's salvation is wrought out for him in such a sense that nothing depends on his own work, is utterly at variance with all notions of a probationary state, and therefore cannot be received. In that case, the issue of his life depends upon what another has done; therefore there is no trial to him. Now, it may not be easy to determine for one's self what is precisely the doctrine of revelation on this point. But we may be entirely certain that it cannot be such as to militate against the doctrine of human probation; and we may be satisfied that, so far as regards ourselves, all the purposes of the mediation are answered by our humbly and in faith following Christ, and confiding in him; taking care that his mediation promotes our virtue, and brings us nearer to God.

3. The doctrine we are considering also helps to throw light on the *natural character of man.* What this is has always been an interesting question. Moralists, theologians,

and philosophers have perceived that human condition and duty could be rightly understood only through a right perception of the original state of the human being. But what is that original state? One of determined bias toward evil? or of determined bias toward good? Each opinion has been assumed, and men are perplexed with the plausible statements adduced to support each. Refer the question to the fundamental doctrine of probation, as a touchstone, and all important difficulties vanish. It becomes plain that the consequence of the subject has been exaggerated. Suppose there be an absolute depravity of nature, — it still cannot be such as in any degree to take a man out of his own power, or remove his responsibility; because the very idea of probation implies personal liberty and responsibility; and these are destroyed by any ill bias of nature which makes sin inevitable. There can be no trial in his case concerning whom it is already decided that his nature is such as that, do what he may, he will sin. Why mock him with a pretence of trial, if it be already fixed that he never can do well with his first nature, and never except by a change of his nature? Probation, in a creature just commencing existence, implies a capacity to do well, and a capacity to do evil. It implies that these faculties are yet unextinguished. The soul can do right, can do wrong — has dispositions toward right, dispositions toward wrong — neither of them decided — else why probation? The purpose of probation is to decide them. Agreeably to this is the description of the apostle, when he describes the contest between the law in the mind and the law in the members. The two laws exist in the original frame of man. He is placed in this state of discipline that it may be determined which of them shall have the ascendency. To suppose the ascendency of either at the outset, so that, by constitutional depravity, he should sin, and

sin only, until specially converted, or so that, by constitutional holiness, he should necessarily do well, until violently prevented, — to suppose either of these is to abolish a probationary state, and to set up something wholly opposite in its stead.

4. Again; the fact of man's probation illustrates the doctrine concerning *the final destiny of the human soul.* Nothing can be more free from confusion and difficulty than this doctrine, when life is viewed in its probationary character. The final destiny is such as grows out of the character formed in this life. It can be nothing else. And this is what is so often, so distinctly, so solemnly asserted in the Scriptures. "Every man shall be judged by the deeds done in the body." In various forms and connections this assertion is reiterated again and again; illustrated by many of the Savior's parables, and confirmed by the whole tenor of his teaching, and that of the apostles. This is the doctrine which accords, and alone accords, with the idea of a probationary state, and which ought to satisfy the inquiries of every mind. Any thing beyond this enters into details of the future state, which, perhaps, we are at present incompetent to know; which, at any rate, it is unessential that we should know. It is only important that we "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." That there should be no distinction, in the end, between these two characters, — that all alike, at the close of this preparatory state, should enter on a state of equal felicity, — is an idea too preposterous and absurd to receive a moment's acceptance with a serious mind — an idea which breaks down the everlasting barrier between right and wrong, and supposes the law which unites happiness to virtue to be abrogated — an idea which turns to folly the doctrine that life is a probation, and makes life's

whole purpose and character an inexplicable enigma. But if our curiosity steps beyond this line, and asks the manner and degree of the difference which God will make between the righteous and the wicked, — asks to be certified concerning the nature and the place of retribution, and the duration of the consequences that follow human transgression in the eternal state — a question to which the mind so often turns in its musings, and which so often fills the anticipations of the future with trembling and alarm, — then we go beyond what is requisite for purposes of probation, and to points which that does not explain; then we subject ourselves to the rebuke that our Lord gave to a similar curiosity in the days of his flesh. They asked him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" He would not tell them; he would not lift for them the veil that covers the secrets of the eternal future; he bade them not to allow themselves to be diverted by this unimportant curiosity from attention to the one thing needful, which demanded all their care. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." You are here on probation; keep that fact in view; make sure of your own preparation. And all his disclosures, from time to time, on the subject, seem to have been formed with reference to the same principle. His startling language of alarm; his terrible images of agony and woe; the everlasting fire and undying worm; the devil and his angels; the outer darkness; the weeping and wailing, — images of the deepest terror, and most affecting, yet not always consistent with each other, — as if he would make the strongest impression, and yet without distinctly teaching what man cannot yet know, — all these are illustrations of his design to proclaim that the right use of the present discipline is the all-essential thing, and that it is enough to know the general character of the certain retribution of eternity, without minutely scanning its more par-

ticular details. We know that the measure of happiness and misery in a future state will perfectly correspond to the fitness of each individual for either; and trusting to the equity of that appointment under the rule of an infinite Father, and the judgment of a merciful Savior, we should rest content, though every question except this remain wrapped up in impenetrable darkness. There will be joy and sorrow in proportion to faithfulness and unfaithfulness; and joy will continue to visit the good as long as they remain faithful, and sorrow to prey upon the bad as long as they continue evil. There can be no doubt but that that continuance is described by the fearful word "*forever*." And when we hesitate whether it be possible that this word can be used in its absolute and literal sense, then we must consider that, as a free moral agent, depraved by bad habits, and hardened by long selfishness and sin, is doubtless *capable* of keeping on forever in rebellion against God, so there is no difficulty in understanding that the penalty of such guilt may last forever. It is the natural issue of a misused and perverted probation.

I have thus attempted to show in what relation the great fundamental doctrine of human probation stands to the other truths of religion, and how it may be used to advantage as an interpreter or test. So far as this view is just, it should persuade us that no habit of mind is more important to us, in speculation as well as action, than that of referring every thing to the question of the purpose of a moral discipline. We have nothing to do on earth but to see to it that moral discipline be effective in our own case. This habit of mind will not clear up all difficulties, — for some subjects are beyond the reach of human knowledge, — but it will teach us that the concealment of some things may be just as profitable to us as their revelation could have been.

It will not teach us that difficulties in doctrine are unimportant; but it will show us that, if regarded with respect to a moral discipline, mistake in reference to them is of less moment. We secure their moral purpose, though our understanding remain darkened. And, finally, it will make us more and more solicitous to cultivate perfect honesty and fairness of mind, in our interpretation of holy writ; to put aside prejudice, passion, and pride, from our theological investigations; to inquire simply, singly, conscientiously, perseveringly, for the truth of God; since such moral qualities as these are developed and disciplined by the difficulties and obscurities of the Scriptures, when those difficulties are properly used; and since these same qualities, beyond all else, are likely to be rewarded with the discovery of truth; and since, moreover, these qualities, if not so rewarded, if we still fall into error, will extract from that error all its noxious qualities, and render it harmless to the soul. The absolute perception of truth without doubtfulness or mistake belongs to heaven; the pursuit of it belongs to earth. Let the pursuit be honest and faithful; as it will be by him who knows that he is on trial, and to give solemn account. It may be rewarded here; but that is of small moment: it will be rewarded hereafter; and the stern discipline through which the soul has passed, will be worth more for it, both here and hereafter, than if it had been endowed with the most intense perception of all mysteries and all knowledge, without that tried moral strength which is the soul's security and glory.

SERMON XXXII.

THE DOCTRINE OF PROBATION A KEY TO THE MYSTERIES OF GOD'S DEALINGS WITH MAN.

1 PETER I. 7.

THAT THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH, BEING MUCH MORE PRECIOUS THAN OF GOLD THAT PERISHETH, THOUGH IT BE TRIED WITH FIRE, MIGHT BE FOUND UNTO PRAISE, AND HONOR, AND GLORY, AT THE APPEARING OF JESUS CHRIST.

"GOLD is tried in the fire," said the son of Sirach, "and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity." In the same spirit, with still greater force, does the apostle, in our text, assert the value of tried faith — "more precious than gold, which, though tried, perishes, because it is imperfect." Of similar expressions, with regard to the value of trial, the New Testament is full. There being one great end set before the mind, every thing is to be judged of by its tendency to promote that end; and as the tendency of trial is to strengthen faith, to give constancy and endurance, to purify and perfect the character, therefore it is said in the Scriptures, "Blessed is the man that endureth trial;" and again, "Wherefore, I rejoice in tribulation."

Thus the language and practice of the apostles were imbued with the sentiment of the doctrine, that life is but a

state of probation. All events were looked upon as disciplinary, and judged of accordingly; and men were regarded as being good or evil, according as they used, or did not use, the trials of this life so as to conduce to "praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Of this doctrine of a state of probation I have already spoken in two discourses; but it ought to receive yet further discussion, and is capable of more extended application.

There are mysteries and difficulties attendant on the common ways of life, and the ordinary course of Providence, no less trying than those which are found in the higher regions of religious truth. The vicissitudes and uncertainties of this earthly existence are full of them. From the cradle to the grave, life is one long period of perplexity and anxiety; a fitful, changeful day; suddenly brightening, suddenly overshadowed; in which no calculation can be made for the coming hour that may not be disappointed, and no pleasure seized in the present that may not turn to bitterness in the grasp; — where one sows and another reaps; one deserves and another gains; where "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."

This character of human life has not escaped the notice of any one who has observed and reflected, while it has too often baffled the philosophy of those who have discoursed upon it. By some it has been regarded with sullen acquiescence, and by some with stubborn defiance. With some it has been a matter of perpetual and exasperated complaint. It has given food to the skepticism of some, and has made a pretext for the atheism of others; while

some, in the weakness of their faith, have sunk under it, bewildered and broken-hearted. And it is only by listening to the teachings of religion — which fills all things with the paternal presence of God, and the glorious light of immortality — that the whole becomes clear to the thoughtful and trusting heart. "When I sought to know this, it was too wonderful for me, till I went into the sanctuary of God."

Let us see how far the doctrine that life is a state of probation will aid us to expound these perplexities, and vindicate the ways of God to man.

The subject takes two divisions: the first concerns the *moral providence* of God; the second, his *natural providence.*

Here, then, are two points that have always exercised the minds of men — why is it that there is any moral evil in a world which is the handiwork of a Being whose infinite holiness must hate, and whose infinite power might prevent it? and why, this evil existing, has it been allowed so much to usurp the distinction and success which are due to virtue?

No wonder that these questions have awakened solicitude. They touch every thing that is most interesting in the sacred character of the great Lord of all; whom we desire to adore, not with a vague and terrified submission, but with an intelligent and filial trust; whom we wish to perceive to be venerable and lovely, as well as to bow before him as mighty; and concerning the character of whose purposes and dealings, therefore, we would fain be satisfied that they correspond with his rectitude and love. The first impression, however, is, that there is much in his doings which does not thus correspond with rectitude and benevolence. Is he not perfectly holy, and does he not

desire holiness alone in his universe? Why then, so constitute the universe as to allow so large license to sin? Why expose the weakness of his frail children to such various temptations? Why allow such obstacles and perils to their virtue and their happiness, when, apparently, he might have protected their innocence, and insured their felicity, without exposure or impediment? And thus one of the most fruitful sources of personal anxiety, oppressing and harassing the spirit, as well as of speculative inquiry, bewildering and baffling the intellect, has ever been this question of *the origin of evil.* Is it from God? Is it from the devil? Is it from the necessary nature of things? Is it from the essential evil of material organization? Could the Deity prevent it? If so, why not, when he is all-holy and benevolent? If not, why not, when he is all-powerful?

The mind stretches after a solution of these questions, but in vain. They are beyond the range of its powers. The mystery still remains.

And why should it not remain? When we make ourselves thus uneasy in trying to solve it, we forget our just position and true relation. We must bring up to the subject, and apply to it, the doctrine of a state of probation. This will enlighten us as to our true relation, and make us content to leave the unfathomable questions unanswered. For we are under probation — it is a moral trial, not an intellectual — the trial of our faith, not of our wisdom — not to test the perspicacity of our mind, and the profoundness of our judgment, but the docility of our disposition, and the readiness of our obedience. Our reward is to be found, therefore, and our satisfaction obtained, not in solving deep problems, and gaining the power to see through all as God sees, but in cherishing humility of soul, and uprightness of will, and surrendering all to Him who sees all. Duty

grows out of position and relation. Placed and related as man is, it can be no part of human duty to comprehend the purposes of God; but, because we are finite, and dependent, and accountable, it is our duty to trust, submit, and obey. It is the trial of our "faith, which shall be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." The question will not be, whether we have made all clear to our understanding, but whether we have rightly used that which *is* clear.

And what is clear? This one thing always, and under all circumstances — that in the government of a Being of infinite wisdom, and love, and almighty power, all must be right, and will be well, whether we perceive it or not, — our perception of it is nothing to the purpose, — and that to creatures under probation, beneath the eye of such a Being, all will work together for good, if they love God, and faithfully perform his known will.

So much is clear. And to what more satisfactory result than this could we possibly arrive, if we should be able, through much agony of thought, to reach the hidden sources of mystery, and ascertain the divine reasons for the divine purpose?

These remarks apply equally to the second point — why evil, being permitted to exist, is also permitted so often to usurp the distinction and success which of right belong to virtue. It is one of the oldest and most constant subjects of complaint — one which stood as a stumbling-block in the way of such holy men as Job and David, and which seems inexplicable to thousands at all times. — "Why should the wicked prosper and the good suffer?" — We might boldly reply, that all this is only in appearance — a seeming inequality, and not a real; and that the whole mystery is to be solved, by observing that the good man, with his outward

evils, is a happier being than the bad man, with his outward good. But without insisting upon this, — allowing the thing to be as it seems, — we then may apply to it the full weight of the doctrine of probation. We may say, it is no part of the idea of such a state to maintain the line between virtue and vice. The very contrary is the idea. "Let both grow till harvest." Give them each full sweep and fair play — ample room and range enough — let each get what it can as it goes on. To interrupt their purposes, and interfere with their plans, by interposing judicial distinctions, would change probation to retribution, and so would prevent that complete acting out of the character, for the very sake of which the probationary state was instituted. Let the wicked triumph — it is only for a season: why be perplexed thereat? Let the good be unsuccessful and cast down — it is only for a season: the day of retribution comes, and in the face of the universe you shall "return and discern between the righteous and the wicked — between him that serveth the Lord and him that serveth him not."

2. *Natural providence.* — Here, too, are mysteries which have always tried the human mind. We cannot forcibly put them aside from our observation, and bid them hide themselves from our presence. They are interwoven with the very fabric of human life — they make a part of the very constitution of things on earth. We cannot say that we will not heed them — that we will scorn them — that they shall not affect us — that we will make ourselves callous against them. This we cannot do; or, if at all, it can only be at the expense of our humanity itself, which must suffer more in this most unnatural attempt to resist what the Creator did not mean we should resist, than all the woes that are the consequence of his ordination. It is salutary to abide whatever visitations belong to our place and our

nature. We know not what blessed influences we lose when we shrink from the appointments of God.

Yet, doubtless, there are many we would gladly shrink from. "O that the cup might pass from us!" To what a variety of evils are we exposed! what strange and apparently capricious vicissitudes! what sudden reverses! what noonday eclipses! what overwhelming deluges! making life a scene of seeming confusion, a succession of accidents — persons and events thrown promiscuously together, without purpose and without disposer; so that, at one moment, we shrink from what is turning up for us as from the chaotic bosom of chance, and at the next, recoil from what seems the blasting breath of blind or malignant fate.

Observe, too, the strange irregularities of human condition, the appointment of a kind and merciful Father — from the cradle to the grave, attended by marked and indestructible distinctions; whole nations born to the inheritance of hardship, want, degradation, and barbarism, or to the patrimony of refinement, knowledge, civilization, and Christianity; in the same nation, whole classes introduced to luxury and comfort, whom no want can approach, and whom plenty always attends, and other classes, by their side, hardly groping their way through wretchedness and toil to a scanty and precarious subsistence. In the same circle, in the same family, what differences, physical, intellectual, moral! One stands before us radiant in beauty, attracting by personal loveliness, while another inherits a deformity that repels, and makes his society unwelcome: on this side is health, strength, vigor, vivacity; on the other languor, feebleness, an aching frame and a drooping heart; — here blindness, idiocy, insanity; there the glory of lofty intellect, the power of a clear understand-

ing, and brilliant imagination; — in one a clouded temper, to which all days are dark, all action is a burden, all enterprise hopeless, all men objects of suspicion, sullen, desponding, tearful, desolate; in another, a bright and buoyant spirit, which opposition cannot daunt, nor danger discourage, nor disappointment fret; cheerful and laughing in all toil, and equal to the burden of any calamity! Are all these *men?* Are all these, so variously endowed, and with so opposite qualities, all members of the same family, endowed by the same Father, required to observe the same law, to be tried by the same rule? We gaze appalled on these great and terrible contrasts. We are almost betrayed to the exclamation, "The ways of the Lord are not equal." We are ready to take up the burden of the old complaint, and repeat the ancient language of amazement and grief.

But introduce now the great truth of a probationary state, and this difficulty all subsides, these irregularities are all justified, and the agitated, doubting heart is soothed to rest. Certainly, if this world were all — if these measures of weal and woe were the final allotment — if, neither now nor ever, here nor elsewhere, there were compensation — then the difficulty might press upon us, and the heavy heart would be unrelieved. But say the word, "This is all probation;" this is only a preliminary discipline; this is but a preparatory trial; and from the height of that serene thought we look down upon this disquieted scene of things as from a lofty mountain, which levels the inequalities of the world below. If all are to be treated, when life's brief and fitful day is over, through the immortal ages that succeed, not according to the measure of their endowments, gifts, advantages, opportunities, but just according to their use of them, then all are treated alike; then there is no inequality; and this is the vindicating doctrine of probation, recognized by all

the teachings of conscience and nature, when they startle the soul with their fearful looking forward to judgment, and assisted perpetually by the great teacher of the New Covenant, in tones like this: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; and now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

Undoubtedly other considerations may be adduced, other arguments urged, and appropriately, too, to reconcile us to these various mysteries of the providence of God. Truth is not so limited, nor man's knowledge of it, that only one thought can be found to help the disturbed mind. But for our present purpose this one thought is ample. He that will take it into his soul, and let it work there amid his musings, and habitually try every thing by it as a touchstone, will find it adequate to compose the misgivings of his thought, and restrain the unreasonable rovings of his speculative fancy. It will not clear up the mysteries of God's *moral* providence: they cannot be cleared up: "*the secret things belong unto the Lord our God.*" But it will do what, to a trustful child of God, is quite as satisfactory — and what, indeed, is all that a more perfect clearing up of mysteries could do for him — give him perfect peace, in the assurance that all is right and will be well. And this doctrine, that all is right under the government of a perfect God, is one of "*the things revealed,*" which are said to "*belong to us and to our children forever.*"

Nor can the doctrine of probation remove all sense of suffering from the mysterious inequalities of the natural providence of God. They will still affect the condition, still prey upon the mind. But it will vindicate them from all charge of inequality; nay, more, will cause them to be looked upon as among the most quickening teachers of virtue and promoters of faith and holiness, which a gracious

Father has placed among his children. For observe, brethren, how the case stands. These allotments are independent of our choosing and our desert. They are simply the appointed circumstances in which God has placed us to act and to be tried. Health, sickness, prosperity, loss, are simply circumstances by which we are to be tried, by which our characters are to be tested, and our destiny determined. Observe this, brethren; and have we time, then, to wonder, to complain, to speculate, to build theories about these things, when the only thing important is to use them? Can we have the audacity, I had almost said, to stand parleying about these circumstances of our earthly lot, when the issues of eternity are suspended on our *using* them? Can we fancy it of any serious moment whether these twenty or forty years be spent in a hovel or a palace, in a strong or in a feeble body — if they are only spent well? We do not pretend that there is not a difference. God knows that pain is wearisome and heavy, and sickness a sore grief, and hunger, and penury, and long discouragement, and the loss of children, and a broken home, are ills that wring the breast, and force tears from even hearts of stone. But God knows, too, that they are all wholesome inflictions; and when, through faith and patience, they shall have worked out for us a far more exceeding weight of glory, *we* also shall know and feel how little cause we had to repine at the severity of trials which have led us upward to holiness and rest.

And on the other hand, if the bright allotments, the prosperity, and advantages, and success, and envied privileges of human life be ours, let them be rejoiced in, but with trembling. What cause for congratulation, excepting in their right use? They also are only trials. We are apt to give that name to adversities; but there are trials of prosperity too — in the sight of God and a healthy soul, no less trials than the other.

Providence is vindicated only when prosperity is regarded in connection with probation. So long as we use it for our pleasure, our pride, our boasting, so long it drags us away from heaven, and may ruin while it delights. Only when used as to be accounted for, and as a means of fitting us for the final good which God bestows on his accepted children, only then is it really a blessing.

My friends, it is easy to perceive how this doctrine, which we have been considering, may be made a universal director of life.

Suppose a man to keep it in his mind as an ever-present thought, so that he shall be every moment alive to it; let him walk through the day as if repeating to himself, "This is all probation; this is all intended to try and improve my virtue; and I am responsible for the manner in which I use my trial: every thing is an opportunity; I am free to occupy it as I will; I have a moral judgment which must decide how I shall use it: now, therefore, 'watch and pray' be my motto." Suppose a man to keep himself in the thoughtful state which this represents; then has he not a universal directory? Can he be taken by surprise? Can he greatly err? Can he essentially fail? Feeling that every occurrence is a test, he would employ it as such; he would not think of making any other use of it; he would not give a second thought to any other proposal. "I have but one thing to do," he would feel; "that is, to see to it that my probation does not ruin me. Nothing is of any moment in any event except its bearing on my responsibility. I have but one thing to do, — to occupy till He come, and make my calling and election sure."

Such a man would not doubt about duty, nor live the hesitating, vacillating, inconsistent life, that most of us, alas! are leading.

For in truth there is little reason to suppose that most men attempt this habitual thoughtfulness, or at all propose to themselves to make that use of life which is here implied. They take life as it goes. They pursue that course from day to day, which from day to day is suggested, aiming at other and inferior ends than the discipline of virtue, and governed by other thoughts than of their responsibleness.

Yet, if there be any justice in the views which our subject presents, such persons are thus exposed to imminent peril. If we allow ourselves inferior purposes, — if we wink out of sight the one purpose for which we are here, and for which all is appointed, — we only imitate the folly of our great progenitor, who, for an inferior end, lost sight of the purpose of his one trial; and we must expect, like him, to be driven from paradise.

One would think the matter so plain that there could be no room for doubt, no possibility of evasion. We can conceive that the deceitfulness of the heart, the blinding and insane power of passion, the crowd and hurry of an enticing world, should occasionally, and for a season, draw one away from regarding the grave reality of his position, and make him forget the great business of his existence, in the tumult of pleasure. But we should think the power of reality would return, and with it a sobered mind that would refuse to run the dreadful risk again. Yet how far is this from being the case! The opposite is the fact: the life of the majority is in oblivion of the true intent of life, a devotion of days and months to error and passion, with an occasional moment of seriousness and thought. Six days and nights to the world that amuses and perishes; and two hours of the seventh to a hasty and dissatisfied glance at the only important and lasting interests.

Is it not so? And what are they to do, when their Lord cometh and reckoneth with his servants?

Awake, therefore, whoever you are, that have not yet realized the value of this fundamental consideration. If you would be true to your nature, just to your position, satisfied in the end, take up the strong determination, and carry it out, in daily, hourly application to all you meet, or do, or enjoy, or suffer. Remember that, as a creature to whom great trusts are committed, and by whom account is to be rendered, you cannot safely have any other guide. Consider this in forming your plans of life, laying out the scheme for occupying your years. When you choose your business, you are then determining in what way, by what discipline, you will be tried; and you may indefinitely increase or diminish the hazard to your virtue and salvation, by the faithfulness or unfaithfulness with which you secure the right employment of your faculties for goodness and devotion. How often may we suppose that an erroneous choice, from false principles, has sealed the doom of the soul that has thus shut against itself the door of life! How often, in the fond idea that happiness lies in a life of ease, have men buried their talent in the earth, and with it all sense of their accountability, and so rushed on the doom of the unprofitable servant!

I have thus explained the doctrine of probation, and its uses, in bearing the trials and performing the duties of life. One word more in conclusion. Remember, for your encouragement and your admonition, the principles on which the Savior declared that the final issue of this probation is to be decided; — by fidelity to your trust. The right use of trial strengthens the soul and enlarges its capacities, so that at every step increasing greatness grows upon it; and to

him who thus hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. Ineffable reward for the toil and endurance of faith and patience! But, on the other hand, by negligence, sloth, unfaithfulness, you diminish the power that you had, and come to the end so impotent and empty, that it may be truly said, what you had has been taken away from you.

And, my friends, we need not wait for the end before we discern signs of these results. We see them already; we feel them in ourselves. We are conscious, some of us, that by right use of discipline we have conquered many ill habits, and brought our body into subjection, and gained the dominion over our affections and our will, and enjoy the pleasure of being, in some good and increasing measure, self-governed and independent of the influence of the world. We are conscious, some of us, of the dreadful fact, that our hearts are not as warm, our sensibilities not so keen, our will not so strong, our appetite and passions not so well governed, as they were. To some of us it is easier than it was to do well; to some, less easy. To some of us, religious truths are more affecting and dear; to some, they have become tame and uninteresting — a natural consequence of the different courses we have chosen to pursue! and it is easy to see that a persevering continuance in the same courses will ripen the faithful to a still maturer glory, and bring down the slothful to a yet more hideous darkness.

If the true character of our probable course be thus set before us, it would seem that there could be no alternative; that no man could be mad enough to cast himself away. And yet there is one delusion behind, baseless and weak, yet plausible, to which multitudes surrender themselves, and quiet their agitated consciences by the stupefying opiate. "By and by," "there is time enough yet," "to-morrow" — this is the most hopeless of all delusions, when a man

sees and feels within him the approaching ruin, as I have described, and yet delays to shun it. It is encouraging and fixing the weakness of the moral will. It is boldly, and in express phrase, defying the commandment of God. It is gambling with the chances of heaven and hell. To-morrow? Your probation may be closed before it dawns. The last trial allowed you may be in this passing hour. Even if you live, yet your *probation* may be ended. Such a thing is not impossible. You may have so long resisted the appeals of duty, and thereby weakened your moral will and affections, that now you cannot feel. You may have lost the power to repent. Neither the mercy nor the severity of God may have any more effect upon you; and the very death-bed, to which you look forward in the hope it will prove your awakening, will only prove, as I have seen it, that the soul which refuses the discipline of life may become callous to that of death. *To-day*, therefore, while it is called to-day, *harden not your hearts!*

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries
1 1012 01196 6027